Transcript of Effie Kokrine Interview #1 with Oral Sources Class, UAF 2001

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Transcript prepared by Linda Johnson (December 2001)

EK = Effie Kokrine
WS = William Schneider

000:

WS: Okay. Today is September 20,2001 and this is the oral sources class, Anthropology 670. We have the pleasure today of having Effie Kokrine with us. So Effie thanks for taking the time to do this. Um. I wanna start by our assignment actually. These students have been asked to pick an object that's important to them and when I was at your house the other day we were talking about the skin scraper. And could you, could you start today by telling them about that skin scraper and how it's important.

EK: Well I wish you had told me that we'd have skin scraper I'd Have brought a scraper but you do not, you don't know what I'm really talking about unless you see it. A skin scraper could be um a lot of different ... ah ... objects ... you know shapes or what you're gonna use that scraper for. The scraper he's talking about was a moose flesher but it's still got the scraper. It's ah like a ... you take a ... a bone ... or it started out as a bone or a rock or a file or somethin. It's flat and then you file it down and put a edge on there and put teeth on there like that and you use it to scrape the fur when you're tanning skins. And you could make a bigger scraper for tanning moose skins when you're scraping it like that and it's a wide, a wide blade. But scraping caribou leggins it's a skinny one and the flesher is skinny and so it's ... it's the different shapes and it was long time ago they were made out of wood and stone or um or bone. And I made one out of a caribou leg cause the caribou leg, the hind leg is very strong bone with a flat surface and that was missing from my suitcase that I used to carry. We know what happened to it but it just walked away under two feet. (laughter) And um then I've got one I made out of a trap. You know the hunting trap that ... like #2 trap, the spring? Have you ever noticed the spring on the trap, the spring that you could smash down when you're setting the trap? Well that spring you cut it off about that much (WS background : about four inches) and you could ... and you just make a scraper. You take a ... shave down the curves and that makes a really good scraper. I could have brought that too and um ... so there's all kinds of scrapers and they

could be made out of any hard object.

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WS : But let's talk about this particular scraper. And the history behind it.

EK : Uh huh ... Well ah ... long time ago when there weren't that many tools and the white people were just coming ... you'll have to excuse me for saying white people or natives because there's a difference between the native people and the white people, cause ah ... when the white people came into the interior they had changed our lifestyle. My grandmother was just an Indian girl just you know surviving and these prospectors came into the interior and come fall time they really needed a place to stay, they needed someone to sew for them, make mukluks for them, teach'em how to survive the cold winter, how to prepare our food because lot of them just came and they carried beans. How long is the beans gonna last? Then what did the white man that come from California or someplace know about the animals that they could use for food. So they needed this Indian help so lot of them just start livin' with native women. That's how come my father became a half breed, because this ah this ah white man, this is the only picture we have of this, this white man came and start living with this Indian woman . And then my father was born. And my father had a had time being the first half breed in the Indian village. And my mother in the meantime was born ten years later by another Indian woman and she was also ... she had a baby that was a half breed. Well these two half breeds sort of had a hard time being with the natives. They didn't fit in with the white world, they didn't really, they were sort of looked down on because they were not really true Indians and um so they were two half breeds that was not ... didn't fit in good. So when my mother was sixteen my mother was given to my father. He was ten years older and he, he knew uh a lot about ... you know he was growned up different because he was given away to his uncle when he was a young boy, when my grandfather, whatever (unclear?) that is, when my grandfather left my grandmother his uncle took him for a slave, a half breed slave you know, and so my father learned a lot from living with these two old people, and um, I don't know who took a file and made a scraper, and uh for a flesher? It's a, a, it's a stick of wood about that big , about that tall and then a handle for to put the scraper here that's to use to flesh the moosehide and caribou hide with. So it must be made by a white man because of the craftsmanship, cause the white man the only ones that could know how to uh work on the steel or whatever that file was, anyway it was made out of the little blade and teeth on there, and my ... it belonged to

my grandmother, this woman that raised my father. And when she was getting' old and she was ... she knew she didn't have no more use for it she gave it to an old ... not... she wasn't old then ... another lady that's a hard worker and she come from Kantishna.... valley, but they all knew each other. So my, this flesher was handed to this woman because you're a good worker you have this. And when that lady, old lady was ... before she died she tell me she says "You're the only one that I know that will carry on workin' with skins and stuff which I still do until my arm just lost its power. And she gave that flesher to me over twenty years ago and she died and I got that flesher. And when I die it's gonna go back to this girl that was a ... she came to my house one time and this flesher was hanging in the back room. She says "I know that flesher, that used to belong my grandma." Ok when I die that flesher is going to go to her. So in the hundred years that flesher has made it back, will make it back home where it started from.

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EK : So that's the only thing in my life that I have that's um, that's precious right now, is that flesher, cause it's the only, what you call it, heirloom? Or whatever it is that I have. That has a history to it. And I'm very proud to be the one to put... uh ... you know get in possession of it. And I loan it to different people, make sure that they give it back to me. And right now a girl has it. I know she's not going to do much with it. But at least she's trying. And that's all you could do is try. And you try enough times you know you'll get better at it. But I can't do it anymore because I don't have no more power in these arms. As long as I'm like this I can but if I go like that I don't have no more power.

WS: When you try to get it up above your shoulder ...

EK: Yes when I get it up here I don't have no power and to tan a moose skin you have to have a lotta ... and I try two years ago. I put a skin in the water and I just couldn't do it.

WS: Umm

EK: I could work on it down here ...

WS: Down low around your waist ...

EK: Uhuh. But then I couldn't do nothin' in terms above my arm. People wants to learn in town but that's a very hard work, steady work. And nobody's got that kind of power, staying power any more. It took me nine solid hours to flesh that one

moose skin. Of course I took my flesher with me when I went to Tanana because I got somebody offered me mooseskin. And in the morning I started nine o'clock, I quit to go to bathroom or eat and this girl took my place. It took us nine hours to flesh that one moose. So it's a lot of work, but it's rewarding work when you're through. And I'm just sorry I don't have that flesher with me right now but...

WS: Stop for a minute ... Well Effie let me ask you about that hard working woman who had the skin scraper, that your grandmother gave the skin scraper to.

EK: Well Abbie Joseph was ah... I don't know where she really came from or anything but there was a ... some people living way out Kantishna,, way back off Lake Minchumina. There was a clan of their own just like one big family and Abbie was married into that... the three boys. And ah, when her husband died accidently, um, nobody really know what happened there, but, and she had four children before her husband died. And that one boy died and she had a older daughter, and the uncle to this girl took this little girl and said I wanta keep her. He raised the baby like his own child. She was just little girl, just, and so she was left with Walter and um Elisabeth. But she had a real rough time because in those days she was a widow and she was not treated good. She was the slave of her brothers-in-law. Her kids were taken away from her. She had to sleep by the door in little blanket so she could be alert to any noise that there was or she had to be up to build fire and everything. And so she was not treated good. And Edgar Joseph was the man that didn't have a wife and he was sort of lazy, but he was a good natured guy, and so they figured that Edgar Joseph needed a companion. So Abbey left the Kantishna and her homeland and she went and married Edgar Joseph and that was the best thing she could ever have done because she was considered, she was honorable then, you know, she was the wife of another man and she wasn't treated like a slave. So it took her long time to get her other two kids back but this oldest girl remained with this old man and later became his wife. That's how much law they had back then in those old times. The law was their own making because they were just that family there. And so about in um, thirty, thirty, early thirties she got the boy back and then later she got the, when Elisabeth back and Elisabeth became Fred Starr's wife in Nenana, and uh the boy drownded, because they used to just travel in canoe and on the Tanana River, there's lotta big whirl, uh whirlpools, and uh, and sometimes they travel at night cause you know there's daylight in summertime in June and July. They travel sometimes and the sun gets warm and you just paddling, you can get sleepy or something so we don't know what happened. The canoe tipped over and nobody really know what happened but they think he might have just gone to sleep. Well the sun is so warm shining on him and being up all night or something. And so Abbie became one of our, my elder that I really liked. She was always kind and thoughtful and helpful. And she's the one that got the flesher cause she was a hard working woman. She was a big big strong woman. And uh she had enough

muscles to ... she lived three miles above us on the Tanana River. At the mouth of Fish Creek. And so when she had her last child his name was Fish Creek.

WS: Really?

EK: His nickname.

WS: We'll stop right there.

EK: Umm

WS: Well tell us about your grandfather. Was that John Folger?

EK: Yes his name was John Folger. That was back in 1880 sometime that he came into the interior. And when he met my grandmother, my grandmother was just a young girl. And he start ... he was living , they were livin at Crossjacket and that was in the flat country. But being a miner they were covering mostly the mountains and the streams, you know the criks, where they can prospect, and in Tanana there's ah just the closest to Crossjacket was Manley Hotsprings. So maybe he was mining around Manley Hotsprings when he met my grandmother and then Crossjacket was then bout maybe fifteen, twenty miles belowRam..., Manley Hotsprings. That's where the little village was where my grandmother was. (coughs) And my... she was raised by a blind woman. So this blind woman don't what she was doin' and before you know it she was pregnant by this white man. So he stayed with her and um they had two more daughters but they both died. And the they Had another boy.

WS: I'm gonna get you some water. Keep telling the story....

EK: Uh huh... And they had another boy. By that time my whiteman Grandpa want to go out and prospect because uh there was no future for him in the village just raising a family, and he wanted adventure, he wanted freedom. He wanted to go out and explore. So he left my grandmother and he start travelling around. He went all the way down to, down the river, and in those days in order to travel in the summer time they had to whipsaw lumber with a big saw and make their own lumber and make their own poling boat. So they went down the river. And they went all the way up the Kuskokwim River and there was a place on the north part of Ophir? where it said Folger's and there was at one time a post office there. But now the post office is not there anymore. It's moved to ah, thank you, it's moved to Ophir. And um that Folger's, there's nobody living there now. And then he prospected round there for awhile, and from there they wintered and uh walked over into Kuskokwim River, Kantishna, and all's done he stayed there for a long time and

prospect. And there's another place on Kantishna River where it's Folger's again, where he stayed later. And uh I can barely remember one time I was very small and my father went to visit him but he was living on the Kantishna at the time and I just remember we stayed some place along Kantishna with Percy Dyke's father. And uh then my grandfather from that area he went into Chandalar, no, uh I was thinking of that too right, last night, uh Good Luck Bay or Good News Bay, no no , some place anyway. And he was , him and his partner, he always had a partner, and they sort of travelled together and when they were settled down he , my grandfather had a cabin here and way up the river maybe , I don't know how many miles, was his partner. And they both you know done their own mining. And one spring right after breakup this guy that's up above said "Well I'm gonna go down and visit John, his name is John, and see how he made out you know, so he got there and you know when you come to a camp you always say, you know "Here I am", you know? Like I come to visit you or something, let them know that you're coming. So that you won't be, you know, might pull a gun on you or something. And um , so he announce himself. He come up the bank. And there's nobody, it's like nobody live there. And he was going to the cabin and he saw some bones laying on the yard. And he figure, that's what's happened to him, you know. So he went to Nenana and reported it and they picked up his bones. I don't know if he had a heart attack there or if a bear killed him. Nobody knows cause there was just his bones. And you could tell that it was , the whole body was not there, you know, just pieces, and, and so there were ... his bones was just picked up and uh buried in Nenana. But he had a very, he was very ambitious and he travelled a lot. And he, in those days they travelled just with the will power of their own self. In wintertime they walked, in summertime they made boats and just done what they could but they were exploring too, like you know, opening up the country to different, by that time he could get along without the Indian wife (laughs) ... well you could by then buy a pair of moccassins and you could buy mitts or a fur jacket from here or somebody cause things are opening up to people. But it was hard for the Indians to accept white people. Because they were afraid of them. Here's all native people and one whiteskinned man come and it was hard for them to learn to accept white people.

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WS: Well let's talk a little bit more about your Dad.

EK: Well my Dad was ah, he was a half breed and ah, he was raised by this old couple and he was always working. He's uh ambitious, he learned how to cook, he learned how to wash dishes and he sit down and watch his grandma sew, he know how to sew. He knew how to make a living and cut wood and everything. And um you know I take after him. Because I'm very ambitious too and all my life I been working and when my father was ah, young, he herded reindeer for awhile but that

was in a different country, like you know, here's a Indian Village and Eskimo village, that's different culture, everything. Well he herded buffa... ah... reindeer for awhile and then he came back and then he stayed where he was. And ah, then when he got, after he got married well he was , worked lots with the miners, cause, ah, at Fish Creek there's a long crik, and at the head of that crik is a big lake, and at the head of that lake is American Crik run into Fish Lake. And there was a mining camp there, like ah, Woodchopper, and Toffdie, and all those mining camps were up in there. So my father was hauling freight from the Tanana River, up this river, across that big lake and hauling freight to the mining camps. And so we always had a pretty good life, a good living, and ah, then later on, there was a mail plane, mail trail that used to go from Tanana to Nenana. And ah, we weren't living on that trail but we were living on the banks of the Tanana and the mail trail follow along on the hills and there was a place called Long Lake and there was a relief cabin there and there was an old white man living in that cabin, so that when the mail came by he'd ah, be there and have food ready for the mailman and then he'll go out and unhook the horses and put'em in the barn and bed them down and have water and everything ready for the horses. And so when he died my father took that over and so he was there to take care of the horses and ah, my mother was there to cook for the mailman and you know give him place to sleep and everything. So my father was always working, and ah, then later on they switched from horses to dog sled and it was easier then. And in the meantime in 19 um , 1925 you know you've heard about the serum run? To Nome? Well the serum run, there was no airplanes. And they had to get that medicine to Nome right away. So they , they , they got a dog team from Nenana, and the dog team went down so far and changed, and then from there you took over, from there you took over, from there you took over, and it just continues night and day and before it , before it hit Tanana it was my father's ah turn to be up at this certain meetin' point so when the dog team came to upriver he just put the medicine in his sled and could continued on. And this is my father when he came up the bank at Mission. At Mission Hill and ...

WS: ??

EK: Ah ha. And on the sled is the serum. It's wrapped up in rabbit skin blanket. And then my father took it on down to the village, it's three miles above Tanana and then the town of Tanana. He took it to the post office and this is Sullivan, Sullivan Bascoe, from there he took that serum and put it in his sled and continued on down from Tanana and then somebody else took over. So Sullivan, you could tell by that picture he had more dogs and he made the fastest time over all amongst the whole trip from Nenana to Nome, but Soppella got the biggest credit because Soppella was the one that took the last stretch. And Sullivan was never mentioned on there, but I remember when he came back from the States, they gave him a free a free trip to the States and by that, at that time there was no airplanes so I don't know

how he got there, either by train, or by boat. You see if he went by boat he'd have to go by Nome. But by train from Nenana, so I really don't know. I was just too young.

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WSW: Can you tell us about your Mom?

EK: I didn't bring a picture of my Mom as um .... Well my Mom was fathered by a miner and uh this is my grandmother and this is my mother. And she was fathered by a miner but that miner got in trouble with the law. In those days no whiteman can give a native a drink. That's a no-no! Well this whiteman was a kind old man, he was friends with all the natives so he gave this native a drink and this native didn't know how to handle the booze - good strong whiskey, and he went home and beat up his wife. And so they asked her what happened. Well she didn't want to lie. She said her husband done it. And they found out that old Huntington gave this guy a drink and he turned around and hit his wife with something. So he ran away to Canada. In the meantime my grandmother you know she was left alone with the baby. So she gave my baby, she gave this baby my mother to another lady and she started livin with a whiteman. In the meantime the church sent ah people down from Nenana to baptise people, to anybody living together they married them, and gave them whiteman names and stuff and so my grandmother was living with this old Murray when this, this was takin place. So she married old Murray. In the meantime Huntington came back and he was gonna claim his bride and ah she was already married to another guy. So he continued on down the river. That's how come Sidney Huntington and them are my uncles because they're my mother's half brothers. And my mother, um, when she was twelve years old she started work for the storekeeper. And she worked there til she was sixteen years old. So she didn't know how to work nothing in the native ways. Just know how to babysit the white peoples' kids. She was still ah, you know, a half breed. And um so she, she stayed there till she was sixteen and she just got married. She just married my father but my father was very patient and he knows how to do everything. So my father had to teach my mother how to sew and do every all the native work what's there's to be done. And so she was very lucky that way. And uh he taught her everything even how to sew and make clothes and stuff. And um then she, she became sickly and that's how come at the age of fifteen I came back from Eklutna, had to take over running the house for her. Just she got married again and start having kids again and that's ... was hard on me too. Fifteen years old and running house and doing all the work.

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WS: Let's talk a little bit about ah your childhood and growing up and what you remember as a child, things you learned and ...

EK: Well like I said I was very energetic. I was small. I was skinny. My sister is younger than me and she was huskier and she was as big as me. She used to always bawl me out. She used to always boss me. So I was um, oh there's so much to tell about my childhood - it would take me years! And um so she used to bully me a lot. But I always done what I was told and we were taught very young to how to put wood in the stove. What kind of wood to build a fire with. We were taught very young how to light the coal oil lantern, take the chimney off, strike a match, light the lamp, and strike you know ... put out the match. And I was very young I learned how to boil rice because we lived out in the trapline or fishcamp or something where there's nobody to help my mother if anything happened to her. So she taught us kids to depend on ourselves in case anything happened cause when she was um when I was about say maybe five or six years old she was carrying gasoline again gasoline cans was very important to us cause our gasoline cans our gasoline came in a can five gallon can. Our coal oil that we burn for lamp came in a five gallon can and when we finish those cans we take the lid off and make water buckets out of them and wash it out real good. She was carrying two buckets of water up the bank in the fall time and uh they had fresh snow and she stepped on the ice underneath the snow and she fell down and hurt her back. And she couldn't move after she got up and went to the house and she couldn't move. And she was nursing a baby at the time. So she just lay there and of course we had to learn how to take care of the baby. We learned how to take care of the fire. And from there she says "You kids are not going to be stuck without helping yourselves." So she made us do everything when we were small. Wash dishes, but worst to know how to take care of the stove and shut the door good and course we had an outdoor toilet and we I don't remember going doing that but... And so I learned how to work very young. And all my life I've been workin'. I'm still workin! I'm eighty two right now. I should be at the school right now talking to kids but I promised him already I was gonna come here and so I learned very young and I taught my kids to do the same. My ... I never had to have a babysitter. Or my mother never had to have a babysitter because we were all willing to always help and we never got paid either! We never thought of pay! Right now you ask a kid to work and they say "Well how much do I get?" Well if we got extra piece of candy or maybe extra piece of bread that was well great. Anyway so that way I learned how to work young. And when I was very ... I used to see my mother work. She make fishnet. I watch her and it's the only thing she wouldn't let us do is handle the needle and thread because needles was so hard to come by and if we lost a needle, well you know she'd have no needle! So she was always very careful about needles. I learned how to make socks. I learned how to knit and

crochet and ah ... so I never had no trouble fitting into adult, from a child to adult world. When I got married at sixteen I fit right into everything because I even taught myself how to fill in snowshoes, that's to weave the snowshoes and I taught myself to do everything because I just had to be on the move all the time. So what you want me to tell about myself?

504:

WS: Stories. You developed a reputation even before you went to school as a person who could sew.

EK: Mmmm and when I was just small my mother had a treadle machine. And by time I was eleven or twelve I could use that treadle machine but I couldn't uh, I couldn't sit down and use it cause my legs was too short. So I had to stand up and work it with one foot and uh work like that but I could still use a sewing machine. So when I went to Eklutna they had to see what we could do because we all had our duty, our chores. And so they found out I could sew on the machine so they put me on the special duty to go to school only half a day and stay home and work the other half a day. And my job was to make sheets. We used to have a double sheet, cotton blanket sheet double over and make double you know sheet out of it. So we had to cut those sheets in half lengthwise. And um you cut'em off here and make a single sheet and then you cut the side off and you ... the side that you cut off you put across here to make sheets for all the beds for the boys and girls of the dormitory. And so I done that all that winter. I don't know how good I sewed but I sewed enough to put those sheets together and it took me the biggest part of the winter just making sheets. And by that time I was able to sit down on the machine and use two foot and then I start making bloomers, petticoats, and stuff and the nightshirts for the boys. And the last year I was there we ... I graduated to making dresses and I was only fifteen but I done everything I was told but I, then in between that my duty, I was still on special class. So I went to the kitchen and there the cook liked me because I was you know always willing to help. And she had a stool. I was so small I couldn't reach the pot to stir the pots. So she had a stool made for me and so I used to stand on that stool and stir the pots and before the ... well she trusted me so much that I used to open up the pantry in the morning. Go to her room, get the key and open the pantry, return the key back to her room. And stuff like that so I took my work very seriously. I was always part of what I was doing. And I never know when I left my childhood behind and entered into womanhood because it's as if um ... I don't know ... and it's very sad because I, my stepfather, I had a stepfather, and every time he drank, he wanted to marry me off to whoever he's drinking with. Just to make himself look good. Because my reputation was known all over that I was a good worker. And people said, that you know people never used to write letters, they never had telephone, so people sent

words by mouth for me to, if I could consider marry somebody in Stephen Village or something. Andrew was a Catholic. In those days Catholic was a Catholic and Episcopalian was Episcopalian and they never married. It was not right. So he started, started like me and I got married without ever having a date or anything because on account of my stepfather I just went ahead and ... I told Andrew one time, I said "If you have any feelings for me you better do something because my stepfather's trying to marry me off and if I argue with him he takes it out on my mother. But when he was sober he was a nice man but just the few times when he'd drink he'd just make life miserable for us. So I says "You better do something about it." So I got married without even talking about love or anything. And afterwards I asked my husband how come he married me. And it was just a slap in the face. He says "Because I heard you're a good worker." Not because he loved me!

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Side 2

003:

EK: ... play with the dogs. We you know water them and everything so that they're familiar with us kids and they don't you know, they're not, they don't get rough with us kids. And my brother used to play with them and crawl all around them and everything and they're familiar with kids. Because you don't want a dog that could hurt a child. If a dog growl at a child he's a dead dog. Cause you can't afford to have a dog that you can't trust around the kids. So our dogs was very friendly and you could tell by ah lookin' at this, they were big dogs. They were strong power. They were made for power. They weren't made for speed like now where they have dog races, it's only time you guys get a chance to see a dog race is during the races. But in those days they were just for obedience and working with ah people. And in summertime you just put'em on the bank and they'll, they'll alert you if there's anything coming. They'll alert you if they hear something. And you could tell by the way the dog act or the kind of noise he makes to know what to expect. When there's somebody coming there's a certain way or certain sound they make or if they hear an animal in the bushes that they don't know about there's a certain "Umf. Umf.", you know? But be aware. Or if there's a rabbit come you could tell that different bark and you could tell the difference with their barking. If you're feeding the dogs, a joyful bark. Or when you're hookin' up dogs you could understand just about listening to them what they're you know just what's going on. But you have to learn to get the message from them too that ah ... the different noises they make. So the dogs are really a good companion and they're a good help. They're a protector. You could sleep without worrying about anything coming to

your camp. So we always had dogs and um and we're ... you know we just learn how to handle them.

032:

WS: Would someone like to ask Effie a question?

EK: Come on! (laughter)

WS: Jennie you've been put on the spot so you better grab the microphone.

JS: Oh no!

WS: And be ready to ask a question.

JS: There's so much I could ask. Okay. Are we on?

WS: Uh huh .

JS: Oh. Okay. Um ... My name's Jennifer Simpson. And um I'm loving hearing your stories Effie. Thank you so much for coming to visit with us.

EK: Thank you.

JS: Um ... Did you have any brothers and sisters?

EK: Oh yes I was the second oldest of fourteen children. Because in my time there was no such a thing as birth control. And we all lived in a little house and there was no privacy, no nothin', so I was taught at the early age to ... ah ... that your husband is the boss and you done as you were told. And so I was the second born child of my mother's and she had fourteen children. Of course she had two marriages too.

JS: (Inaudible comment) ... there enough? Ok?

EK: Ok. Come on let's ... the man there. See if he can do better! (Laughter) You won't say nothing? (Laughter) Have you ever been married?

J?: No

EK: Well no wonder! (Laughter)

WS: Joe you've been put on the spot. (Laughter)

SR: My name is Stacie Rathbourn and I was wondering ah, what how what exactly subsistence wise did you eat? Did you eat mostly just what you got? Or did you eat from stores too?

EK: We eat from the store too because my father was ah always working for wages. So we're able to buy just about whatever we need from the store but there was limited supply of what we could get from the store because we didn't have no airplanes to bring in fresh food. So wintertime all we had was ah rice and macaroni and dry fruits. Of course we had butter, as long as the butter would last. But the rest of the time we had fish, rabbit, just living off the country but you always had fresh food. Somehow or nother Mother Nature provide for us to always have enough food. In the springtime when the ducks come in we used to shoot ducks and uh have you know fresh ducks. And then that would probably last until we get fish and we get fish all summer and then in fall time we start hunting moose and things, put away our food for the winter. And all winter long we get rabbits and uh well sometimes we get caribou or something you know. So we always got fresh food. Sometimes we get pretty low on stuff. But then we manage to get by. Even during the Depression was the hardest part because when you had the Depression, also, everything gets like you don't get no moose. The caribou go away, the rabbits go away, so when you get the Depression, Depression is a time when you have nothing. You, you just have to really work hard to survive. Well I was a teenager fifteen years old during the Depression. And one time in spring time right after the ice went out we had nothing to eat. We ... the last of our dry meat was gone and I didn't know what to feed the kids because my mother was sick in bed and I had to be the mother and father and everything to the kids. And so I didn't know what I was going to serve for breakfast the next morning. So I went down under the bank after the ice went down and I took a dip net. Dip net is a big hoop with a net like they go Chena ... Chichitna fishing except it's ah for white fish. I sit under the bank and dip, dip. Finally about eleven o'clock at night I caught one white fish. Well I cleaned that and boiled it up for breakfast next morning but the kids had something to eat. And then you boil the fish you have the broth, you drink the broth. So even during those times you know, I never felt like we had nothing. We had our health and we were always happy. And then my stepfather killed a moose and we had to eat it fast because we had no refrigerator. And I tell this to the kids in school. You know bout how nowadays "I want hamburger, I want hamburger. I want pyjamas." You know. I remember cutting up the backbone, taking the worms off, bringing water, lotta water and boiling it, and as it's boiling the worms come up to the top. I scoot it off and put it in the dog pot because the dog pot, that's good soup for the dogs. And we ate this backbones, I could have ... oh I used to love to cut out meat, cut ... you know take the moose and cut the ribs around the ribs and the backbone and I could dismantle the whole moose with just a pocket knife. And

I used to love to do things like that. So I cut all the backbone in pieces and boil it up and it, it doesn't taste rotten, it tasted just like you know aging meat and we ate it and thought nothin' of it! Now how many of you people would actually eat meat after the worms separate from it? No, cause you didn't have to, but if you had to you will. And you'd think nothin' of it. You'd think you're lucky to have that. And I'm not ashamed to tell that to the kids. And I'm not ashamed to tell them that I ate a mice. You know because that's part of my education. But that ... I'll wait for another time.

SH: My name is Suzette Holman and I actually have two questions and it's at your discretion as to which one you feel is most appropriate. The first one ...

EK: Ah ... I can't hear good.
SH: I have two questions ...

EK: Yes.

SH: ... but it's up to you to decide which one you might like to answer ...

EK: Aha.

SH: Which you feel is more appropriate. The first one is I wondered more about your life at Eklutna, at the school. What things you might have learned in class.

EK: Well that was a hard ah time because from a native ah being round native people I had to go to a school where it was all mixed and we had to live the white man's culture and we had to eat the first whiteman's food with no moose or fish or in between, just like beef and stuff from the store. And we all had our chores. We all had you know we had to obey and still I was the smallest little girl. There was a lotta people bigger than me. And I had a hard time because ah those people made fun of me, and pushed me around because I wouldn't defend myself. And they say I talk funny. And of course I remember they were making fun of me because when I said "A dog", I said "Dock." Well I didn't know the difference until they corrected me and so it was a ... it was a adjustment that you have to get used to. What's the other question?

135:

WS: Well maybe we ...

SH: I would say maybe go ahead and since you answered that one ...

WS: Ah we're going to talk more about Eklutna maybe the next time because that's a real important subject.

R?: OK Um my name is ???? I'm from Japan and uh this is my first class. I ah just arrive at Fairbanks the day before yesterday.

EK: Wow!

R: Um I have a question about the relationship between the brother and sisters. How the brother and sister relationship goes comparing with ah wife and husband relationship.

EK: Well there're the same as ah you're my buddy, you're my buddy. You could either be my fighting buddy or you could be my helpful buddy. And ah so everything is a little different. My sister was next to me. She was my partner in crime but she was always bullying me and so that ah that was relationship was like a challenge all the time. But I done all the work while she bully me, cause she was bigger than me, she could beat me up. And ah my next brother was, there was a bunch of girls and so my brother was way younger than me and we babied my brother and ah we just ah, while my father was alive we were just a happy family but when my father died and my stepfather came in and then things were a little different then. I was still the slave to my step sisters and brothers but I done it for my mother. I didn't do it for me. I done it for my mother. The only thing I ever done ... my mother died without me ever talking back to her and the only thing that I done against her wishes was to get married and that's because I was scared my stepfather would marry me off to somebody that wasn't ... somebody that I wouldn't be comfortable with. And so our relationship varies. If you come from a well to do family the kids are treated different. If you come from a orphaned like I was, you're little different. If your father dies you are an orphan. But if your mother dies and you still have a father you still got a respect in your town or your village. People still respect you. But if your father dies you are considered an orphan cause nobody wants to take on a ??? (177 - unclear word -schuler??) family to support or take care of so widows had a hard time. But I sure could say thank you widows don't have that hard time any more (laughs) cause I've been a widow for twenty three years and I'm doin' better than I ever did. (laughter)

WS: Maybe one more question.

EK: Ok.

WS: And then ah next time ah we'll start at this end and work around.

EK: We got time for a couple more quick ones.

MB: My name is Marla Bryson and I was wondering how you met your husband Andrew. Or how you knew him. You said that you wanted him to make his move fast so that you weren't married off.

EK: Well ah ... you see village of Tanana is where my stepfather lived so we lived in village of Tanana which is three miles above town and Andrew lived in town. And I wasn't allowed to mix with the kids so I was separated like, so even I know who he was and who his folks was I didn't know him personally, and when he danced with me that's the only time that we got to you know be close is when during the dance if he dance with me. But then my mother's always there just ah, honest to Pete! My stepfather even had to know every month when I get my period my mother had to tell him. That's how close they watched me. And he never done that to his own kids. But just the way you control. Ok hurry up! (laughter)

LJ: Uh I wanted to know. My name's Linda Johnson and I wanted to know how you found out about the serum being transported? How did the news come?

EK: Hahh... that's a good question because we got mail once a week and it couldn't have come by mail. So it's probably just hand and mouth and a messenger. Oh! They had telephone.

WS: Telegraph.

EK: Telegraph wire for the mail man. Ya, I think that's how.

WS: Well you might want to describe him coming up the bank.

EK: Oh he just came up the bank. (laughter) And this was when he got on top of the bank. He stop and had the picture taken and this was taken by the deaconess. We had a deaconess at the church. And ah it was very cold and he frosted his throat. Ok quickly!

EB: Ok My name's Erika Brown and I think I have a longer question. When you were talking about the moose hide and I wanted to know if you were um smoking it. And if you were what process.

EK: I think that could be answered, it could take a long time to answer the whole question unless you just want to know one part.

EB: Nah I want to know the whole thing.

EK: Ok that's it.

EB: So maybe next time.

EK: That's a long question. There's a lot of work in it. And just the other day somebody came and asked me if I had any rotten wood. And they say "Effie is the only woman in this town that still got a Indian store." (laughter) With that I think we should close.

WS: Yes thank you. Thank you very much. You're very generous.

227

End of side 2.

Transcript of Effie Kokrine Interview #2 with Oral Sources Class, UAF 2001

University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Collection Tape H2001-102
October 2, 2001
Transcript prepared by Linda Johnson (December 2001)

EK = Effie Kokrine
WS = William Schneider

001:

WS: Today is October 2, 2001 and again we have the pleasure of talking with um Effie Kokrine, um I'm Bill Schneider and we're here with the Oral Sources class and ah so thanks for coming again and sharing with us. We're ready to roll.

EK: Ready right now? Ok well the girl that asked the question about the mooseskin is not here. And I want her to be here so when I start this but ah she asked about what's a flesher. What's ... what's use are the flesher? Well flesher is a very important part of a tool when you're cleaning caribou skin or a moose skin or caribou leggings for to make boots out of cause ah long time ago all our clothing was made out of what we had available for us in the line of animals. And if you get a caribou you get it in October, ah ... late in August or first of September and that's just right for a parka. To you know make parki or jacket or pants and the legs in September, then you take the leggings ah ... this is a caribou hind leg and this is the foot and this is the leg and right here is the, the knee and their knee go backwards. The bone will go this way. And you take your skin and cut the skin on the curve side and you open it and ah that's what you use for for boots and the skin if you ah if you get it while the hair is short you could use it for parki and when the hair gets longer you could use it for like mattress or rug to sleep on and then when it gets heavier in the fall you could tan it for use and with moose skin you don't you cannot save a summer skin for tanning because the, the moose is going through changing its winter hair to the new hair and the skin is very thin. And I tried to clean a caribou one time ah ...

030:

WS: Let's stop rolling and ah Effie was just talking about a skin flesher and fall skin. So I'll let you go ahead.

EK: And when the best time to ... you have to keep in mind what you're gonna do with the skin when you're killing caribou. With a moose skin as long as it's ah like September on you could start tanning moose skin for home use. And you could use

the skin any time all winter long because you cut all the hair anyway. Only the caribou skin you have to get according to the what time of the year it is. And if you wanna tan a caribou skin you have to get it before December because after December there's a little bugs will start growing inside of the caribou skin and by April if you clean a caribou skin, clean it in April it'll be full of holes so you use only the fall skin if you wanna tan skin. And ah she has experience with that and ah the moose hide moose skin now we're all here I'm gonna talk about the flesher. Long time ago people used to make a flesher out of a bone but I don't since the whiteman came into the interior and brought file and stuff like that well they switch to, they switch to heavier stuff than bone. Now this is my flesher. This is hand me down four times since it was made. It's made out of a birch and this blade here is one of the first file that the whiteman brought over. It was probably in ah 1870 or something like that. Because this blade is older than 1890. When my father was born in 1890 and this blade is older than him. It was made by a whiteman you know when they first came in to replace the bone. And this is a birch, birch stick and the handle is shaved down to fit a person's hand and this is taped on with babiche, moose skin babiche. You tape it around there to secure it and this has been worn down already with the use of it cause long time ago people used moose skin for all their clothing. Your pants, shirt, mitts, hat, well not really hat, everything and this is the second second ah babiche that's been put on here. And so when this woman had this she was a young girl and my father still wasn't born yet. And when she was getting old she hand it to, down to a girl from Kantishna. You ... Kantishna is a river that leads off of Tanana River and goes all the way up into lake ah Mount McKinley. She gave it to that woman because she say that woman is ah you know hard worker and they wanta make sure this passed on to somebody with that won't let it idle or neglect it. And that woman when she was - how old was Abbey before she died? She was what 80, 90?

WS: 80

076:

EK: 80. Before Abbie Joseph died she gave it to me. She said she's ah I was the only woman that she knows that would make use of it. And I have used it. I have borrowed it but ... oh along bout twenty years anyway I borrow it from her and I give it back to her and I borrow it again and I give it back to her so before she died she told me I could have it. And when I borrowed it I just put a carhart string on here but then oh I didn't like the carhart balance string so I put this moose hide on there and this moose hide is to balance when your hand get tired. This help you balance the needle. And why it's so important to have a weight and this I brought a piece of moose skin so you'd understand it better. There's no use for me talking if you can't understand what I'm saying. Isn't that right.

PB: Uh huh.

EK: Uh huh. Cut the ginny (???)

PB: I brought I just happen to have Abbie's book with me. The woman she's talking about is the fourth one in the front row.

093:

EK: You put a moose skin over ah some kind of a stick. You put a stick secure, now hold, you hold that. Now this is the moose skin. This is only a little piece but then ... I got thread all over cause I'm sewing. And I made a mistake last night because I was tired and I can't see. Ok you you put the moose skin over a stick like that. And then you cut the hair off the moose skin and then you take this and you (sound of scraping on skin) ... you take this ... see that what do they call that skin fibre all that gristle? That tissue that between the skin and the meat.

PB: Membrane

EK: Membrane. It don't sound good with me. Oh bagurt (??) I just know it in bagurt. You take all the bagurt off and the .... If you take it off real good it'll turn out just smooth like this. This is the part that I'll be fleshing and they'll be no no uh tissue marks or something on here. You could even see the blood pores. You could see the blood pores of how well this was fleshed. And so it's very important to have good tools and so I treasure this. And before I die this is also willed already to somebody else. I don't know if she'll ever use it but she asked for it because it was her grandmother that owned this hundred years ago. I like to take it in the grave with me but I don't think it'll do any good. (laughter) And so it's very important and this is a finished moose hide. Without these tools it'd be hard to do because ah I don't know you just need these tools for and as you go along as you go along after you get this all clean (background conversation WS and PB)

124:

EK: Oh ... uh huh. Ya ya. You know how lotta people a lotta people treasure things? I bet you treasure your watch? Do you have a ring on? Who's got a ring on? You treasure your ring. You treasure your ring. You treasure ... what do you have to treasure? What's the best ... what's the most important thing you have? Well the most important thing that I treasure more than a diamond more than my house more than any car. It's this because it has a history and it's got it's meaningful. This have a story to tell that uh nobody ever ... will ever tell. And I want this to go

down in history of ah every anybody that owned it I want knows it ... I want them to know the history behind it. And this is another kind of scraper that is used for that moose skin when you're ah when you're cleaning, scraping that moose skin you have to use this for scraper when you put it in the brain. When you kill a moose you have to save the brain. You save the brains. Wash it, soak it, get all the blood out of it and then you warm it up in warm water and put, jar it or something in and put it away and the it's forment. And when you put that moose skin in the water you take it and you scrape it with this. You put that brains in your solution like uh dish water soap. You put dishwater soap in your dishes and you wash it? Well you put the brain solution in this water and you scrape it (scraping sounds) until you scrape it real good. And then dry it and scrape it and when you're scraping it dry you'll wring it out and dry it. And you put the skin on the stick and you're drying it (sound fades)

PB: It'll be across trees.

153:

EK: Uh huh. Yes they'll be two trees there and then a rope here and uh you put this over the rope and tie it on there and then it'll keep it from slipping and you'll go like this (scraping sounds) ... all day long if you have to until it's dry. And this makes ... this was made for me by (mike falls) oh! Am I talkin for nothin?

WS: No you're doin fine. It's just ... it was a little bit soft and ...

EK: And so the scraper is a very important part of of tanning moose skin and I'm glad you asked that question. And anybody want an ans ... questions, anybody wanna ask me questions go ahead and do it. Because I got more to say. And this is a scraper that's important part too. Because the caribou legging when you after you dry it you scrape all that membrane off with this and this is another kind of scraper. I didn't make this, this was given to me, but I did make this out of a trap. We are lucky now that we got steel ... to work with instead of bones but long time ago this was made out of a bones or this was made out of a rock or just whatever ...

PB: That was from the file? No part of a trap.

EK: Ya that's a this is part of a file too I think or a trap I don't know, uh no I think a file.

BS: We have four scrapers here and Effie's talking about the third scraper now, the one that has ... round one.

EK: The scraper for car... caribou leg ... leggings. If you want to scrape caribou leggings. You scrape like that. Or if you want to tan a tan a beaver skin you use this. If you want a caribou skin to make a parki with the hair on it you scrape this ... take all that membrane off and you soak it and you tan it like that till it's flexible to sew together to make a parki. So this is important in its own way too. And I don't know I've had three different scrapers like that that disappeared out of my stuff. So this is very important so don't steal it Ok? Ok. (laughter) Cause I'll search you all until we find it.

187:

PB: The tools are treasures though. And um ... I just wanna ... we started to live in Tanana in 1968, 1969. And my husband for our anniversary he borrowed Mary Kennedy's tool but it was this kind of tool and um because he was trapping and so I could tan the uh beaver skin. And then he learned you know from different elders but to have a tool cause you couldn't do any of this without the tool and and so many people, you can't buy that kind of a thing. So those are the real treasures.

EK: And this is ... I I was gonna make a scraper out of this too. I was gonna take a hacksaw but I don't ... I have to buy a hacksaw yet. You just cut it in half and then uh when you get down to where you need it you figure out where it's long enough then you cut it off and you file it and you could put the teeth on here like this too. And that you could use this for when you're skinning beaver you have to uh do that to the beaver skin to get all the grease and that meat and stuff off of it and this is good for it because you could use this as your handle. And use the bone but I had one like that. That disappeared. So I made one and that disappeared out of my stuff. So whoever has them I hope they appreciate it and know what it means. I mean know what the purpose of these things are. But you don't see them anymore. Native people don't do that anymore. I could still do it but I don't have the strength. I had Patty here clean the caribou hide and I made a drum out of a caribou drum.

PB: Should have brought your drum.

213:

EK: Ya . Just like after we cleaned the skin it's just like a plastic. You spread it over a frame and make a drum. So I've done a lot of things except I'm getting weak now. I can't do these things any more. And why this stink why it smells is you have to treat the moose skin with, with smoke. Lotta people say smoke is no good for you. But smoke is the best way to treat food. Cottonwood bark? Dried cottonwood. You smoke fishskin I mean fish. You can smoke dry meat with it and moose skins.

You take a dried spruce and make a tent out of it and ah put the fire under it and just ah it smolder and that the smoke goes in through that and keep it from being brittle.

PB: The rotten ... inside of stumps, that rotten spruce.

228:

EK: And ah you could use any kind of spruce for that or even any kind of old wood. But to give this colour you have to get a certain kind of spruce wood that's rotten. That old tree that fell down, dry tree when it rot, it... I should have brought a piece of that too. Uhhh! And you have to get the colour just right. If this is dark colour ... if you burn the dark colour, your skin would get dark. If you use the light colour wood and you burn it your skin will look like this. So it's the colour of your skin is the colour of the rotten wood, that rotten dry wood that you burn under here. And you have to make a balloon out of this, sew it together like it's walkin and put a skirt under here in the middle, skirt out of a canvas, and build a fire in a pan and put little dry wood in. Put little dry cottonwood, I mean rotten wood. And little bit in there, and do that, feed it, fill that moose skin with smoke for about two, three, four hours. Until you get it just right and that's done. And the moose skin is done. And that skin will ... that smoke will preserve the skin, keep it from getting brittle. When you walk you put the skin for your sewers to make moccassins out of it. You go outdoors you get it damp, you bring it in and dry it and the smoke in there will keep it from getting stiff so you just (unclear word???) it little bit and could put it down and just go again. But that smoke is very important for treating the skin and it smells like smoke too. And lotta people say "Well I don't like the smell of it!" But you cannot tan a good moose skin without it. Make boots out of it and wear the boots for maybe half a year, depends how active you are outdoors. Sometimes my husband's boots I used to have to put new soles in it like half the winter cause they use snowshoes and go in and out and on the Yukon River there's a lot of ice. It depends on where you live. Ok. Any questions?

264:

??: So you're smoking it...

WS: Wait just a sec, let's pass the microphone.

E.?: So you're smoking it after you're scraping it with this right, and when it's all dry and then you smoke it?

EK: If it's a young skin you could just go through the process once. If it's an older skin you have to go through the whole thing again like soakin it in the brains, soakin it in the brains and wringing it out and drying it out, and you'll put smoke to it. And but I'm also allergic to the smoke (laughter) but that's ok I love it. So it depends on how heavy your skin is. Now this was probably about a ... this skin I'd say is about a year or two years old. Depends on if it's a cow. If it's a cow skin this would say about two years old. But if it's a bull skin it's tougher and it takes a little more work. And long time ago when people... before people had stores we used to get our meat as we need it. And we don't care if it was a cow or a bull as long as we put food on the table. And the cow skin is always good for fancier work like a dress or you know kids' clothes and stuff. But the bull skin is good for men because they're outdoors a lot and use snowshoes and it's, it's more durable. But you can't tell by lookin at this except by feeling it.

WS: Anyone else have a question before we ... Joe?

292:

J?: So if you were going to leave the hair on that how would you treat it differently. If you wanted to leave the hair on the outside?

EK: With the moose skin there's no reason to leave the hair on it because it's too heavy unless you're gonna use it for a permanent mattress. Because a long time ago people didn't fool around with nothin' they could not carry with them. Like if this caribou skin you could leave the hair on it and use it for a mattress or a rug and it'd be small enough that you take it with you wherever you go. You go campin you put it down on the ground and you're nice and dry and that hair will protect you and the skin will keep the dampness off of you. So there, there is no need to save a moose hide with the hair on it unless long time ago you could use it for a shelter, a permanent shelter. The skin is too heavy to move around from place to place. Your permanent winter shelter you could drape the moose hide around there and it'd be like your house. Because they had no axe. But also you cannot keep moose skin with the hair on it unless you clean the membrane off because it's gonna shrink and shrink and shrink and shrink until the whole moose hide is just about half, half this table. It'll keep shrinking. I see a, I hung a skin out to dry. It was great big skin. Every year it kept getting smaller and smaller and smaller and I was surprised how much that thing shrunk.

WS: But Effie ah what about caribou skins. Do they sometimes left with the hair on?

EK: Oh ya. I just have to tell you for a mattress. For parki. Or ah toboggans. And the legs you use for boots. Moose skin you could use the leggings for boots too but they'd be heavy, very heavy weight.

WS: Caribou skins are hollow. So the the hair fibres are hollow. And that ah I don't about moose skin.

EK: Ya they're probably hollow too cause how else they float when they're swimming. It's like a life preserver. I could bring those things with me to show you but they're all at the school where I work. And ah that's all there so when I talk to the kids I ... you do not understand what I'm talking about unless you see what I'm talking about. So that's the way I got my stuff at the school.

336:

E?: When you're gonna leave the hair on the caribou do you go through the same process as you're doin this?

EK: Ya, you're ...

E?: Except for the smoking?

EK: Ya, no . You, for a parki you'll take the flesher and you'll cut, take all that membrane off or else let it go ahead and dry and then scrape all that off. And then you take a ... we have sourdough. Everybody used to have a pot, sourdough pot long time ago. And sourdough pot is ah you put flour in the pan, and stir it up, make dough out of it and set it overnight until it raise. It's hard to get it started but once you get a sourdough started you save that pot all the time and you'll have sourdough hotcakes. Well you take, if you want to tan a caribou skin, you make extra sourdough and you put some in a little water, the sourdough and you'll soak this caribou skin with it and dampen it all and work it into it and dry it and you could tan it that way for a parki and your for your boots. But if you want tan a moose skin then tanning is you know put it in the brain water and stuff but you can tan ... somehow that sourdough, sourdough starter for hotcakes have some chemicals in there that helps tan the skin. And you could do that with rabbit skins too.

PB: Beaver skins too.

EK: Beaver skins too. Anything that you're tanning that's you're gonna make clothes, use it for clothing. Or fox skins. Dampen the skin part with ah. Now they used to use soap long time ago. But nowadays there's so much chemicals in the soap that you cannot just use any soap. It's found out that you use dishwater,

dishwashing soap and it works better, because I proved it. I put dry washing Tide Tide soap into a water because I has a wolf skin in the bathtub and I just poured that - you know change the water, get all the blood out and I put the wolf skin in the water, and put powdered soap there and maybe I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know that the acid in that dry soap took the hair off the whole skin on one side. That wolf skin is in the garage yet unfinished. (laughter, unclear comments) And then I have another one in the basement unfinished because that happened before I knew that the powdered soap had chemicals in there that wasn't good for the hair. Because they're putting different things in the powdered soap all the time that we cannot use what we used to use long time ago for tanning solution.

390

PB: (Inaudible) I just left Tanana a couple weeks ago and I visited Kerry before I left and um she has caribou leggings that I brought over from Kobuk and um she wants to work on them. She told me get her Felsnafta and everybody, that's the oldtime soap and um so everybody keeps saying that's the only kind ya gotta use but now they were saying you could use anything.

EK: Now you the Felsnaptha soap also has ah different chemicals in there that it's not...

PB: (inaudible)

EK: ... it's not the best.

PB: Well I just sent a bar down to special request to Kerry in Tanana. (inaudible)

EK: They say Joy Joy dishwashing soap is the pure soap for skins that don't do damage to the skin. So you're learning something new all the time.

WS: Ya. Ya.

EF: All the time. Even the old Indians that used to do it the old way can't do it with Felthsnaptha soap anymore.

WS: Well this is good scientific research.

EK: Not only that if you don't have brains you could also boil fish. You could uh, you if you gonna boil whitefish you scale it, take all the scales off or uh skin the fish and boil it, boil it really good and uh make mush out of the flakes and use that broth to tan skin but then your clothing will also smell fishy. But if you were cold you

wouldn't mind the smell because at least you'll have comfortable clothing. But people don't do that anymore. I done that one time. I didn't have no brains to put in my skins, that was before I met you. (Laughter) And ah...

PB: I'm always saving brains for Effie.

EK: And I pass it on. I just gave my last year's brains to somebody that is tanning skins and my rotten wood and he said "Effie's the only person left where you can buy Indian stuff." Cause I save everything all the time. And if you're out walkin and you find a spruce tree that's rotten and you cut into it with the axe and it's nice and chalky, if it's just right it'll be chalky, it'll crumble and you save that, boy that's money! That's what colour the skin. And that skin is permanent. And the colour is permanent until it wear out of course it get dirty and everything. Ok! Any more questions? This is made by a man that died, no he didn't die bef..., but he died after he made this and uh so I treasure my tools....

WS: This is the ulu shaped tool.

EK: (inaudible) Uh huh. And that's for scraping. I have one that I made but I like this one better. Sure you could pass it round.

WS: I think Linda has a question.

LJ: I wondered for boots, for moccassins, um, is there anything special you do to make it more waterproof for walking in damp places or is it pretty waterproof like it is?

EK: No this it's not waterproof but you can put grass, uh dried grass in there and that dry grass will absorb a lot of the dampness and keep your feet dry. Also keep your feet warm because you don't just use the plain grass that you see, those hollow grass. You take certain kinda grass that's mostly blades and uh you find a bunch - it don't take much, they used to put it in a bag and put it away in nice dry place. In winter time they take the grass and you make it the shape of insole and put it in inside of your boots. It's messy, it's dirty but that grass is nice and warm. You ever cut grass and put it in the dog box and just while you're putting it in the dog box, you could feel the heat?

WS: Effie maybe this is a good point for us to talk about the holiday, the holiday season and what went on in the old days when you were a little girl and how um some of this clothing and stuff fit into that.

EK: Well when I was really small we never connected Christmas to gifts. We connected Christmas to gettin together. My mother used to always make sure we went to town. We have to live out of town where we could cut wood and make a living, er get animals, er wherever we could support ourselves. And so we used to come to town only on Christmas an ah holidays. Cause we went to church and that time the church was uh, we we understood about church and ah so we always came to town and the kids that went to school used to get all excited at Christmas because we learned how to sing Silent Night or Away in the Manger or something like that. And we get to see our friends. And we never got gifts but we got new moccassins or a new boots or a new mitts. To us that was just uh important. Oh we used to be so proud. We got a new slipper, we got new moccassin, we used to just just just like tryin to show off our feet to everybody because we're so proud of the new moccassins. And that's all we connected Christmas to is that we got candy because we never, we never fool around buying candy for our kids, just on special occasions. We didn't have that kind of money anyway. We just didn't miss it.

WS: I, I've heard that uh holiday time people used to come into town and ah ...

EK: Ya and used to come from Crossjacket or up the Yukon River or down, people that lived below Tanana used to come up to Tanana, and on special occasions they all come together, like I said go to church together and eat meals together and they used to have potlatches where everybody get together, and some people sing. We had no way to communicate so they used to change, exchange news like who had a baby, and who died, and who is doin this or who is sick or something. That was the time to get to know what's going on around because we had no radio, no way to, a lotta people didn't know how to write and so when us kids were small we learn how to write and make a list for people that wanted to go to store or something and so the, there was a telegraph line that the army put in about the time I was, I was born in 1919 and that's when the army post was folding up so they had the telegraph line and they they - ring, ring, little ring, little ring, that'd be yours and your three long rings that'd be yours, three short rings will be yours, short ring, long ring, short ring will be yours. That way they know who they're calling, what station. But everybody along the line would pick it up just to hear news you know and you'd be talkin, you'd think you're talkin to each other but you'd be talkin to the everybody that's along the line. So you didn't tell anything that was secret. (Coughs)

552:

PB: (ianuadible) I know you came from out of town to town but in those days did the people that stayed in town go around door to door to get, you know how they're trying to bring back old time ways at Tanana and so the Native Council people, the

adults and some kids they'll go from door to door and everybody will put something from their kitchen in the cloth and then they'll go and um have a big community meal, big potlatch? Did they used to sing and collect like that long time ago?

EK: I guess they did uh, but but only one time I heard them go to door to door to and sing Merry Christmas, but when they go from house to house that's mostly to collect meat because we never had no canned food and stuff to just give away, like rice or whatever. If somebody comes to your house, what do you have to donate for the potlatch tonight cause tonight we're gonna all come together. Instead of you bringing cooked dinner they just go around and get meat or rice or somethin and then one person cook it and they, you come to the house. I mean you come to wherever they're eating and then it's all there. But now lotta people just cook at their house and bring it like a potluck or else you could donate and have one person cater to the whole thing.

PB: (inaudible)

EK: Mhm. There was the men, some would be cutting wood and some would be carryin water because we didn't have no running water so we have to carry water from the river and they'd be haulin wood and cuttin wood and they'd have tubs, big tubs that make their soup in it and it was just ah just ah somethin to celebrate doing, just like ah you know you get together, you and her get together and you'd bake bread and sweets all day and you're havin a good time. Well that's just a way of celebrating ah being together. And the funerals, people were poor so ...

WS: Let's wait a sec on the funerals.

601 : End of side 1

Side # 2

001:

EK: ....important and you're, it was news you know. And they take it to Tanana and Crossjacket and all over where people can come together. They'll spread the word. They'll say "We're gonna make tea." For in his honour. Then they'll all come together and some people will bring gifts or food or dry meat or whatever they had to share. And they have a memorial potlatch. But right now every year people below Tanana always have potlatches but it's their thing. But really I don't believe in it. Except havin one potlatch when we bury the person cause everybody, the natives all come together and ah share the sorrows with each other, same as they'd share a wedding, you'll share the joy. Well nowadays there's so many people dying

all the time that we're just going from one every week I go to a funeral or something, but still people bring, donate, you'll bring fish, you'll bring potatoes, you'll bring rice, you'll bring coffee, you'll bring sugar and salt, you'll bring crackers and we still get together and have a potlatch and um that's ... we share our grief. We share ea... we don't let this one person grieve by themselves. Even you really don't know the person. And that's one time when like if you and I don't get along real good, I, I'll ignore you most of the time, but if something happens and we're at a funeral I'll talk to you and I'll be nice to you. That's a time to, to get over your grievance or somethin, I don't know and I think we all went through that couple of weeks ago during eleventh of September. I think we all went through that, what I'm tryin to say. It brings people together. It brings love together. That's what I tell the kids in school. Not, not too much, just the importance of sharing love, sharing each other. Sharing each other's sorrow and joy whatever it is. ... and Tanana the elders do not keep the young kids away from the funeral. If you die you don't tell nobody not to come. You don't tell children "Don't come. Don't go to the funeral. Don't look inside of there." Those children are going to be your future. They're gonna know the feeling, the understanding to go through this. Go through the emotions. My daughter died about three years ago and that's the first time those, her children got to go to a funeral. And she was gonna be cremated and ah they said she's not gonna put on clothes, they're not gonna put on clothes. I told the kids, I said "This is important time. We're gonna get her clothes and we're gonna dress the body, touch the body, comb the hair, touch it so you could understand and the feeling and look and see everything. You'll understand what a person goes through and when they got through they dressed their mother up and put on socks and brush her hair and everything and by touching their mother it was easier for them to go through this loss. And they thanked me afterwards for letting them do that. Because lotta people tell their kids "Don't, don't look at their, person, dead person or don't look in the grave and stuff but I think it's nice because if you're goin down the street, goin down the road, highway. You had a accident and this little boy was left alone and you're dead. How is that boy going to cope with it unless he knows what to expect? I think it's a good thing. I never used to want my kids to go around there but I think it's good to share. To good for them to see. They used to tell people "Don't look at dead animals and stuff." But it's part of learning.

PB: It's part of life.

056:

EK: It's part of life. You don't know what the future holds for you. Anybody with questions?

WS: Effie, um, you um um said last time we got together that you never knew when you left your childhood, that uh uh you, you all of a sudden became a woman. And I thought maybe we should back up and talk about that a little bit.

EK: Well my father died when I was twelve years old. No just before I turned twelve. And ah of course I had to help my mother baby sit and everything. And then ah he died in February and then that spring when the steamboats start running, the ice went out on the Yukon River and the boats start goin back and forth to deliver freight up and down the river, there was a man on there selecting kids to go to school because if you were a widow you have no way to support yourself. You can't stay in town so your one child can go to school. You'll stay in the camp where you can get wood and water and maybe set snares or get spruce hen or rabbits or whatever. You'll stay there. To eat, for survival wouldn't you? Ya. And so these kids that were not able to go to school, well he picked them up and so I was sent to Eklutna. We had to go on the steamboat and then we went by train to Eklutna. Eklutna was ah eighteen miles north of Anchorage. It was the school for just bunch of children that otherwise wouldn't go to school. And so from there I spent three years and I, we learned responsibilities. We learned to do our chore. We learned how to work and worse, the most important thing I learned being in that school was doing things by time. I still do things by time. I look at the clock. Even I don't have a clock I could tell by my body what I should be doing at certain times. And so I learned responsibility and caring for others and then when I turned fifteen I got the notion that the kids were talkin about running away and they gonna like, this girl wrote home and says "I'm gonna run away from the school if you don't send for me." I thought that was sorta cute, heh and so I don't where I was going to run to. I don't know nobody, no place. I don't know ah, I never been to Anchorage. Anyway I wrote to my mother too and I told her, I said "I'm gonna run away if you don't send for me." Gad what am I talkin about there? Anyways so they sent for me. When I got home my mother was sick and she had a bunch of children. She was married again by that time and I had to be the mother and ah the caretaker of all the kids right then. But I already had the training. I work in the kitchen, I work in the dining room, I work at sewing. So I could do all those things and so I just took care of the children. Cause when I first went to Eklutna they find out I could use a machine. I was small and I was only twelve years old but if I stand up, I stand up, I could use that treadle machine and I could sew. I could make straight stitches. And so I spent all that fall hemming blankets for sheets. Because we had cotton sheets big as this table, double. They were double cotton sheets. We cut'em across the foot and then we cut the piece here, and I was sewing them together make single sheets. Then we made bloomers and we made nightshirts and we made, just gradually over the years I learn how to sew. By that time the cook in the kitchen, she started to like me because I was so willing to learn. And we take flour sacks and wash them. And mine was nice and clean. All

the writing came off so she used me as example for them kids, other girls to do the same. I learn how to help, she had a stool made for me to stand on so I could be able to stir the food on the table. And she started trust me. And that's the best thing she could have done for me is trusting me. I give her my whole attention. I just give whatever she asked me I would do because I know she trusted me. She let me go, get up in the morning, go to her room, open the door, get the keys, go down stairs, open the pantry, come back, put the keys back there and that really helped me. It gave me a lot of confidence in myself. So it was easy for me to just come home and do all that for my mother. And so I never really had a teenage childhood. I got married without even having a date. I got kissed, but just in the passing and I don't know, I didn't ah I was, I knew what I was doin when it was time to work, wash dishes, cook, and I had to clean meat, cut meat, everything but emotionally when it came to boyfriend, I was ... nobody to talk to. We're in camp by ourselves. I had nobody to talk to. So I got married just really green. And that was not right because it shaped my whole life. I don't rrbr ... regret getting married and havin children at so young age, but I regret not knowing the emotional side of growin up. And I used to work, make babiche out of caribou skin. That's another thing. We clean caribou skin and we make babiche for snowshoes and we can clean moose skin and before we start the tanning process, cut it up in stripes, strips to make babiche to make build a sleigh with and I could do all that, but emotionally I was crippled. And I married a man that was, didn't have no knowledge either of communicating good, and so I had a lot to learn. And now that I'm a widow for over twenty three years I see where the mistakes were, but it's too late to do anything about it now. So I am do what I want and bein who I am and I'm working at the school so that's the best thing that could happen to me because I learn confidence from the children. I learned to speak my mind. I learned how to communicate with those children because they give me the courage to do these things. And I really ... I tell the kids too that they give me this ah hope. They give me the, they give, they charge my batteries. Ok.

152:

WS: Can I ask you to to talk now just a little bit about Andrew and who he was. Oh we gotta get you hooked up. Yah. Ok.

EK: (coughs)

WS: Ok?

EK: Hmm. Now Andrew was born of Mary and Andrew Kokrine and when he was two years old, they moved up the Yukon River. They got a place where this ah old white man used to stay and so they got, he gave'em the, this ah, his camp because it's a

good fishin. It's a tough country - it's right above the rapids on the Yukon River. And um ... In winter time it's a very cold area to live. And it's ah when the ice freeze up it's really rough. But it's a good place to fishin. And fishing on the Yukon River through the canyon, it's hard cause it's so swift, the water is so swift, but it's good fishing because the fish come to the beach where the water gets real swift so they get really the best choice of fish through there. And so Andrew, my husband, was the youngest boy of that family and he had one sister that's younger than him but since he was the younger boy, he had to do all kinds of chores, or his father tried to make him do all kinds of chores. And in those days the boys used to help with all the chores, whether there's fish netting or hauling wood or whatever their Daddy was doing the young boys had to follow suit and do the things, learn how to do these ah chores and then when they get bigger, well they take over, and ah, so before he was fourteen my husband used to have to row a boat, a big boat in the morning and at night to check the fishnet, and it was like three miles below where their camp was. So my husband had to work hard, rowin the boat. Goin down they could float down, but coming back with a boatload of fish, he has to row the boat. I don't know why they never towed. Because towing, towing the boat is sort of easy but somehow he rowed it, and I mean he row he oared, and he says it was hard and he was starting to get resentment because he was doing all the work, and there ah eight miles below there, there was an old white man. So I guess Old Man Kokrine said something to Andrew about you know doin his work or something or I don't know. There was a disagreement anyhow. So he left, my husband left home at fourteen, and started to stay with this old white man. And he never have to work so hard, like rowing the boat twice a day up and down the river. And so he stayed with this old white man for four, three years, three years I think, ya, till he was seventeen, and he got along well, and he had a couple years of schooling. But the schooling that was important to them long, at that time was learning how to hunt and learning how to trap, how to take care of the fur, how to skin the animals and how to take care of the fur, and dry it so that you don't put it close to heat. You let it dry so at where it's cool and it does something to the skin to dry naturally, and then you turn it inside out. You put it on a stretcher with the hair inside and ah, skin on the outside and then you take it off the stretcher and turn it inside out and let it dry with the hair out, and brush uh the brush the hair and fluff it up, and he was learning stuff like that. So he was a man at ah seventeen. Then his father decided to bring him back. Tell him to come back and stay with him. So he got, Andrew's father then got the contract to carry mail from Tanana to Wiseman. You could see it on the map there. It's a long stretch and he used to go from Tanana to Wiseman way up in the Kobuk river, ah Koyukuk River.

WS: Maybe we should stop a second and I'll let people (unclear) reference.

218:

WS: Ok so we're back on and we're talking about Andrew and that amazing job he had, mushing the mail.

EK: Well the first trip he went with his old, a a brother that was next to him. He took the mail before but he just got married and he wanted to quit the carry mail. He wanted to stay home with his bride. And so it was Andrew's turn to, to learn the route. Well the first time they went together and after that Andrew had to go by himself. And it takes ah about three weeks to make that round trip because every ten miles there was a roadhouse, and every ten miles he had to leave enough dry fish for the dogs to eat on his return trip. So he, he couldn't just put it in the house. He had to tie it up on the ceiling, and uh let it hang there because there was so many mice around there that if he left it on the floor, the mice would just eat it all up, or squirrels or something. He couldn't put it outdoors because some animals will find it so he had to hang it up in the house. And sometimes he'd leave a little piece of frozen meat because that's all they had, they didn't have no canned food or nothin, and if he did take a canned food, fruit, I mean canned food like Spam or something, it's too heavy, it's just weigh the sleigh down. And to start out with that would been too heavy of a load. Anyway he'd have meat, fish for the dogs and maybe fruit or something for himself at every cabin. And then he'd make the trip and they come back, then he come back light except for the mail that he collect at Wiseman. And during the winter the, the natives, them people at Wiseman used to send all his, their fur. So Andrew had to bundle up all that fur and bring it into town and sell it for them and take their money back to them. And so he was learning to be a mailman, plus learning how to trade, how to judge the fur, and about what price you think you'll, it'd be fair to them, and still he have to have, I don't know if he got his cut from the selling the fur or if just went with being the mailman. Anyway he, he done that for three years and then they start ... anyway he, after that three years he quit and I don't know how they took mail after that. Probably dog team or airplane, probably airplane stated because that was the first time we saw airplane was in 1930, and then when I left Tanana it was no airplanes, like when I came back three years later they were carrying mail from Tanana to Nenana or wherever with airplanes, and so time really changes, but when I was real small from Nenana to Tanana, the mail left Nenana on the Sunday, and every so many miles there's a roadhouse. And that horse team had to reach that relief cabin, there's about maybe five stops, because if he left Sunday he wouldn't reach Tanana till the following Sunday, and then coming back he'd leave the next day and get back here in time to go back to Tanana. So it, it takes him two weeks to make that trip and this other team will take him two weeks so they just meet each other like that. That's when I was still in Tanana. But when I came back I don't remember so I guess there must have been airplanes by that time. And we used to look forwards to comin back to Mission from town, to come down with the, the

horse team because we used to go to Mission three miles above town where I was stayin with my grandmother. And ah we used to go up to Sunday School, after Sunday school there was church, and then people eat, and if it's a good day we wait for that, the horse team to come across the river cause about three o'clock they, you'd see them cross the river and then we all just play, and accompany him back to back to Tanana, to town.

288:

PB: Those trips from Nenana to Tanana was with horses?

EK: Yah. When um ... when uh ...

PB: Not dogs, horses ...

EK: Horses before the dog team. And any mail that was going from Nenana to Tanana went to Tanana with horses and from there my husband used to take it over to Wiseman with dog team. So it takes you about a month to get your mail but it was the only way they know how.

WS: So was Andrew doing the mail carrying when you were married?

EK: No. That ah, he quit before then. He was just a trapper and a fisherman and whatever for survival when we got married. There was no jobs. The only jobs they had was, there was a mining camp at Rampart which Andrew's brother worked and Andrew stayed home and got the dry fish, he cut fish for the dogs, he cut fish for eating, dry fish in winter time and he took care of their dogs, cause the dogs were a very important part of their life bein fifty miles above Tanana. In order to go to town with dogs in winter they have to hook up dogs and go in fifty miles. Sometimes they have to stay overnight on the way to Tanana. And so Bergwin (??) work for the wages and Andrew work for the fish and the hunting and the dog food and the eating fish and stuff and put away fish for eating in the fall time, and so it took the really lotta work, just for a just for livin. And then Bergwin (??), course he's workin for wages, then he'd buy the gasoline for the boat, and so it was ah, you had to work all the time in order to just live. We never saw no money. Everythin was done by trade. Even my father when he cut wood for the steamboat, we never saw no money. He just got a slip of paper and give it to the storekeeper and giv'em storekeeper tell you "Ten dollars every cord of wood." Well that's the only way to make money. Besides fishing and it was really hard, but when you're young you don't think of it as hard, you just think of the fun that you're having, an just remember the good times and some hard times, and oh there's lotta things happening to a kids. But when I grew up I grew up just into adulthood right away because of all my

responsibilities. And then getting married I had to act like a married woman. And I, I had to show my husband how to make babiche from caribou skin, you know, the remains (??), and ... but I wouldn't trade my life. I'm glad I was a teenager during the Depression. I was glad that I had the Depression, the tough life while I was young and then have it easier now that I'm old, instead of havin it easy as a child, young person and havin, having a tough old lady. Because I can't take no more toughness. I'm gonna go to clinic tomorrow and they're gonna ah decide what to do about me because I keep havin problem with my heart and the doctors think it's the stress on my leg that is affecting my heart, so I don't what's tomorrow is gonna bring. I don't count on doin anything after next week.

WS: Well Effie this has been a good session today and I think we've all learned a lot, not just about Athabaskan culture but also about how to live and what life is like, so thank you very much.

EK: Is it over again? (laughter)

WS: But we are gonna we are gonna have to get back together.

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End of side 2

Transcript of Effie Kokrine Interview #3 with Oral Sources Class, UAF 2001

University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Collection Tape H2001-104
October 25, 2001
Transcript prepared by Linda Johnson (December 2001)

EK = Effie Kokrine
WS = William SchneiderEffie Kokrine

001

EK: My house is so dry, my nose is dry this morning.

WS: (inaudible)

EK: Uha

WS: Ok. Now today is October 25, um 2001 and we have the pleasure of again doing an interview with Effie Kokrine. So again thanks for taking the time to do this. Um so we were just learning a lot about the bones and the right leg versus the left leg bone and so now let's, uh, we were talking about your history in growing up and the last time we talked one of the things you said was that you really didn't have much of a childhood, that all of a sudden you were thrust into adulthood with responsibilities.

EK: Uhuh. Ya. Well in those days life was different than it is now. Right now, 16, 17 year old teenagers, if you get them to do anything, it'd be child abuse. In those days 16 and 17 was considered adult. And they had the adult responsibility. Like at 17 my husband was carrying mail up to Wiseman with dog team, and at 16 I was running a household with bunch of kids and everybody else and doing all the work in the house. And at 16 I never thought, I never thought of it as ah, something that I shouldn't do. I just felt like it was up to me to you know be adult and have adult responsibility the way I had all my life cause my mother taught us to ah, to be dependable and um to do our share cause everybody in the household had chores. And we never thought nothin of doin our chores. And um so at the age of 16 I was like getting up in the morning, building the fire, makin coffee, cookin breakfast, feed my brothers and sisters cause my mother got married for the second time and she was having children again. In those days there was no birth control or nothin so she started havin kids again so there was a bunch of little kids in the house and so I cook and take care of the kids, wash dishes, wash clothes, get water, heat up water on the wood stove and, and we, it's just, it was nothin for me to do it because that's part of life. That's the only life we knew. And by time I get through with that it's

time for lunch and we never had snacks like the kids do "Oh I want this, I want that!" We have sit down to eat at three times a day. And there was no snackin in between. And we never had sandwiches and stuff, we just had bread as a part of the meal. And biscuits. And lotta times we have cold hotcakes. Because we used to have sourdough pot every day. We had our sourdough pot for our hotcakes in the morning cause that was the cheapest and ... it, it was the cheapest way to have breakfast cause lotta times we couldn't have cereal. We never had cereals, we had cooked, cooked cereal, like rolled oats or cornmeal or Farina or and ah, my kids never saw corn flakes till I come to Fairbanks I think, and then I used corn flakes just for lunch, like after school lunch or something, so always had hotcakes for breakfast, sourdough hotcakes, you can continue on the sourdough pot year after year. And at Rampart there's a man right now has a sourdough starter that's started hundred years ago, when Rampart was just beginning. The white man came in and introduced the sourdough pot to the native people and so we have that sourdough pot yet and ah I still have a beginner, part of, part of that sourdough as a beginner in my freezer until I just threw it away last year. It was dried out and you could keep it dried like crackers? And then put water in there and start it over again. But I let mine lapse because I live alone and I didn't need no sourdough pot. But now I started a sourdough pot again but I find that my stomach don't like it anymore. My mouth likes it very much but my body is changing. You understand sourdough, sourdough pot? You make sourdough and it just goes on and on and on. And it's very, it tastes, it just tastes good. And it, the sourdough mix you buy at the store, it tastes different and ah it's not so satisfying and so it was, it was nothin for me to take the role of a adult and then at 16 my stepfather when he drinks he was, he wanna marry me off. Wanna marry me off. And ah (laughs) and then when he's sober he doesn't bother me. But when he start drinkin he say "Oh you wanna marry her?" If he was drinking with you he'd say "You wanta marry her?" And then he's drinkin with you, you know and ah I didn't want to take it anymore one time so I just got married at 16 and then I had to go into a different kind of ah, I had to be a wife. And I wasn't ready to be a wife really. But I used to feel sort of let down about that because I feel like I had, I was left out of a lot of growin up years. Like women talk. I never had time to sit around and just chat cause I had chores to do all the time. And ah, when I got married I found out that I was sort of, got left out of so much cause ah, we got married 6 o'clock that night. We went to a dance, got up, went to bed six o'clock in the morning and got up couple hours later and then we went up the Yukon River 9th, 10th of September, or 10th of October. By that time there was, it was cold weather and we moved up the Yukon River to be all alone for three months and the, the first night on the Yukon River my husband told me to "Get up and cook!" and I don't know where nothing was. And I said "What do I cook?" He said "Go down to the boat and bring up the caribou meat." We just killed a caribou going up the river and "Go down to the boat and get some caribou meat to fry." So I got up in the morning, went down, all strange

places, and the dogs looked at me and I got lotta comfort out of that, at least the dogs welcome me. And so I brought up a ham, caribou ham and brought it in the house and had, I remember cookin the meat, fryin the meat for breakfast, but I don't know what else we had. And so it was, it was just ah a different time for me. Different type of the growin up because I was livin before that in a house where I know where everything was. And there I was moved into a place where I didn't know nothin. And then from there we moved out to the, I went to a camp where we're gonna stay in wintertime and we lived in a 4 x, 8 x, 4 x8 , no, 6 x 8 tent. And that was another thing, that the trees on the Yukon River was different than the trees on the Tanana River, so my husband told me to get spruce boughs to put on the ground where we put the tent. I look around for a good spruce tree and there was none (laughing) and I looked around, looked around cause I was used to Tanana River where the spruce is, they just stand out. And when you put it on the floor you weave it in and it's just down flat. Well so I just picked some, put it down on the floor. What do you cook? How do you cook for a man that you're never ... see I got married without even havin not one date and it was sorta hard. So I had a lotta adjustment to make but I done pretty good, because when I was 15 I cleaned, cleaned a moosehide and made babiche out of it, and then so when I, the second year after we got married uh my husband needed snowshoes. So I told him what I needed, the caribou skin and ah, so he got me a caribou skin cause there was lotta caribou on the Yukon River that time and I got me a caribou skin and I cleaned it and fleshed it and then we cut it into strips just like this to, to make snowshoe filling you have to run it under your finger nail and cut it in little strips like that so we cut up the caribou skin, made babiche, and my husband made the snowshoes and then I told him to make me a needle. So I tell him, he said "How I goin to make the needle?" I told him to get a nail about this long and flatten it and you put that nail in the stove and get it warm and then you flatten it out real good then shave it down and taper it. This would be a good right here to make a needle out of it, make it thin and have it tapered on both ends and have a hole right in the middle so you put this ah babiche in there and make it long and then you go like that and weave that, the filling in the snowshoe? Well I could, I could do that except I didn't have the tools and ah well, I have to do it so I looked around and found an old pair of snowhoes that's broken and I studied it, how it's woven and where it starts, I followed it, and I unravelled it and then I put it back together and I unravelled it a little further. I done that three times and then when my husband was ready with the snowshoes I could, I filled the whole snowshoes and it was just as, you know it was good, it was done the way it supposed to be. But so I was raised different than the kids nowadays. Nowadays you ask a child to do something and it's, it's hard. Ok what did you want to know?

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WS: Well that's pretty good. Your, your first winter you spent down river? Or upriver?

EK: Up the Yukon River it's ah fifty miles above Tanana River and twenty five miles below Rampart.

BS: Mhmh.

EK: And no water. We have to melt snow all winter long. Because ah we were, we moved way back on count of the wind, we moved way back, like it's a high bank here, it'll be flat down where the back where we had little cabin there. They whiplogged the lumber, they whip, they made big ah scaffold and put a log on there and they had a saw and you go like that and saw lumber for half of the floor and ah and the wolf stretcher and stuff, they whiplogged the logs and it was sort of different life all together, different than my, what I know because remember I was in Eklutna till I was fifteen.

WS: Right.

EK: And ah ...

WS: So um what I was wondering about was when you had your first children? That must have been that next spring or fall? Or...

EK: That next summer.

WS: Aha.

EK: I had my first baby in August and ah I tell my husband when I, I had an idea that what happens when you're pregnant and so I told my husband before Christmas, I said I suspect I was pregnant and I tell him "Gee I don't what to do. I'm not ready for that!" And he says ... I said "How will I tell the people?" Because I had to tell my mother everything, everything I do I had to tell my mother and I had to tell my mother something. I says, "Well I don't want people to know I slept with you!" And he said "Well you're supposed to, it's part of, you know, everybody expect it." Well I didn't! (laughing) And ah so I was ashamed, I was ashamed to let anybody know that I was pregnant because I didn't want nobody to know I slept with my husband. I didn't connect it as a daily thing you know. Uhmm. So the next October, or next August I had my first child and when I told my husband I think I was pregnant he says, I wanted him to worry about me, baby me or something you know, I needed a shoulder, and he say "Oh my dog does that all the time." (laughs)

And I felt, I felt let down again, so it was really rough! (laughing) It's not funny. So he could compare me with his dog and I needed sympathy at that time.

WS: And no other women around huh?

EK: Nobody! Nobody around from October when we first moved to camp until December when we moved to, went to Tanana. And then we had to go with dog team.

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WS: So when you went into the hospi... did you go into the hospital?

EK: Yes. It was ah my due date, and ah so the nurse put me in the hospital three days before my labour started because my husband was at fishcamp and he had to take, to carry the fish and stuff so he left me in town and the nurse thought, well I should just go into the hospital and be prepared, so I was in the hospital when my labour started. And ah I didn't know what to expect or anything. Although I was with my mother when she had her baby and I just sat on the edge, the foot of the bed like this and she put her feet against my back and I don't know what happened, I dunno, I just focused on what's ahead of me. I never see what's goin on behind me as long as I was, she used my back for the pressure and the baby was born and I just took it and bathed it and started takin care of it and so I really didn't know much about, and she never made noise. She never even you know haa... So to me I don't, I didn't really know what was happening. But it was twenty one hours before my baby was born. And ah there was just a nurse at the time at the hospital and she got scared so she went and got the janitor. And she said "I want somebody with me." So she got the janitor and he, he stayed with her till my baby was born. Nine pounds. So my grandmother was in town but I didn't want her around. I just, I didn't want nobody around me. I'm still that way. Like I was in the hospital month ago, I didn't even want my kids to know it but I had to tell'em eight hours after I got in the hospital. So ah, I don't know, my life was different than anybody else because of how dumb I was. I was dumb in the, in the way of life. But I wasn't dumb in working. Because I stayed three years in Eklutna where I was taught responsibility and how important it is to watch the clock. And I'm still like that. When Bill, he's late, nine o'clock and he's not at my door... (laughing) Ok, what else ah?

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WS: Well let's see um, you were running, running dogs in Tanana before you came to Fairbanks right?

EK: Yes ah, just by the time I had my second child they decide to ah have a dog race for the women and ah, I just had a baby a month ago and I tell my husband "I wanna get in the woman's race." He said "Not with my dogs you're not." And he took off. And so I was home, just feeling sorry cause I wanna be in some kind of activity. When you're home twenty four hours a day with children and then I was raising my sister too so I had her from the day I got married. And so this young man came in, and I know his father had three big dogs and I tell him "I wanna get in the race so bad and I don't have dogs." I said "Could I use your father's three dogs?" He says "Why not?" you know. So we went to his house and we hooked up the three dogs. And he says "Oh take this little female too." He had a little female there. "Take it too so it'll, you'll look like you have a lot of dogs." So I got in the race and when we, the man that I got the dogs from, this was Tanana and ah, this was Tanana and this was Yukon River. Well we had to go down there and turn around and come up on the other side of the river. And this old man had a, his homestead right below there and I had trouble there. So this woman that I had, that I caught up to, well she got ahead, anyway she was ahead of me and going down I caught up to her ya, and then coming back she got ahead of me and I was still havin lotta trouble cause these dogs wanna go to their camp. So I finally turn them around and come back and I had to hold the brake all the way comin back but just the feel of it, driving dogs and the feel that you're in control, that you're doin somethin on your own. It's just, it was just thrilling to me. And that's where I got hooked on dog team, but my husband was very strict with the use of his dogs so I never got much opportunity until we came to Fairbanks. And when we came to Fairbanks, that was another sad part because in 1948 my husband came to Fairbanks to work, ah Ladd Field, Ft. Wainright. (laughing) I'm just like a little kid, you're takin everything away from me! Um in 1948 Ft. Wainright was Ladd Field and they were just building the army post so my husband came up to work there and I stayed in camp all summer. And it was hard, with ah, no man to run the fish wheel and take care of the fish and so I had a hard time. And he stayed up here from springtime until December and in all that time he only sent me eighty dollars. And so when I moved back to ... our fishcamp is fifty miles from Tanana. When I moved down we had our old boat, went to Tanana, then I sold some strips and stuff to get by but I was just had really hard time. So the next year, 1949 he was gonna come up again and I just sort of had enough. And I tell him "If you go to Fairbanks, I'm gonna go with you or else we're, our marriage is done. I just can't hack that living alone all summer again with no money." By that time what, I had two, three kids and raising my sister on top of it and so he says "Ok you make arrangements and move to Fairbanks after the river is all clear." So my husband, my uncle Jim Huntington was comin up in um, in June from Galena, from Huslia he went down to Galena and then from there he was comin up and we heard about that, so I just got ready and decide to come up with him. But we had our dogs too. What am I gonna do? And so

I went to this old man, he likes me because I'm always helping him? So I asked him if I could borrow his poling boat. A poling boat is ah, a boat that's bigger than a Peterborough, that's a canoe that you see around in the Chena, it's bigger than that, made out of lumber, the whipsawed lumber and so he said, and I'm the only one that can borrow anything from him because everybody was scared of him, he's too cranky. But I helped his wife when she was sick and so I couldn't do wrong in his eyes. So he said "Sure!" So I borrowed his boat and tied it behind my uncle's boat and put the dogs in there and came on up to Fairbanks. So we landed in Fairbanks under the Cushman Bridge and we tied the dogs on the beach. My husband was there to meet me and he took me up and showed me "This is the house we're gonna stay in." and went to work. So I went down and I got the kids and I move into that house and left the dogs there and I guess they hollered all night long, you know, in a strange place and we had dry fish so I gave them all dry fish and they were in the boat from Tanana up to here without eating or anything. And so I had to find some place for the dogs to be and the only place was you know where the, that curling club is? Was ah dump pile. Cause in 1949 Fairbanks was small. They had only one bridge and only Second Avenue was all the activity. And so we had moved our dogs down there and I couldn't go down to take care of them so we knew this one man from Tanana, he had a, he had a bicycle, ah what do you call those ah, with motor?

WS: Motorcycle?

EK: Motorcycle. He had a motorcycle. So he'll take fish down and water the dogs and fed'em for me way down there, until we got settled and then we moved the dogs up to Grehl where we are now. And so I had lotta responsibility with no transportation, nothin, and we lived in Grehl, and Grehl you had to walk across the swing bridge, walk all the down to the Cushman Bridge and go over Second Avenue and do your shopping and most of the time I just carried my stuff. And sometimes I took a buggy, put the baby in there so I could carry my stuff. And one time, put, collect dog food, scraps from the store, I walked my bike to town because I couldn't ride the bike. I walked it to town and put the box of scraps on the top of it and walked it back home again. So it was very hard and then that winter, my husband used to go out over town and talk with people and I don't know who he talk to, I don't anybody and I know he drove dogs couple times, and he came home and he said "You're getting in the race." I says "I can't get in the race, I don't know the trail." He say "Ya, you're getting in, I already put you down." And so I, I always do what he say, I say "Ok." And ah so at that time the races started under the Cushman Street bridge and they went up to Noyes Slough where the swinging bridge was across the walkway, and you go up that slough and he say "All you have to do is go up that slough and go up there to College Road." Well where is College Road? I don't where College campus is. He say "You go up the bank." Says "Just leave it up to the dogs, they'll go up the bank." Because he's been in several little road?

races before. So I went after I got down to the racetrack I was so nervous I was just heaving and I was just sick ah and I started. Well after we started it was fine. We went up the slough and then there was this woman ahead of me that was havin trouble. So I had trouble with her there and I got started and we never had no snow brake that time, we just had to handle the dogs the best we can, untangle them and put'em back, back on there, they turn off this way, so I had to get them back on the road and start again. And then I went and I look around, I don't know where I'm going and the dogs just went, they went up the bank. They followed this trail. And I was, I was ok then. And my husband tell me "You just watch for a railroad trestle." And so I just kept on going and pretty soon I come to railroad trestle. "Oh well I'm on the right track." And he said "Keep on going until you hit the river." The Chena River. Then you turn to your left and there is only one track, dog track ahead of me, cause they didn't have snowmachine that time. So I hit the river and there was this ah dog trail goin to the left comin back to Fairbanks so I turned there and I came back. And I remember I was fifty some seconds behind the second place winner and I came in third. Well that fifty some odd seconds was important to me cause I don't what the other time was, but just ah, and if I didn't have trouble I thought "Well I'd, I'd do good!" So next year I tried again and I came in second and the third yead I tried again, I came in first. By that time the race was at Creamers Field and from instead of one day racing they change it to two days. And then by the time I ran the third year, by the time we were here five years they changed the race to three days. And so I won the first year, the second year, oh, ok, the first year I got third, then second, then first, then first and the third year I used my husband's leader cause I always have my own dog that obeys me, so when I do fool around with dogs I don't use his leader and I used his leader and he was just running around and just taking his time and ah the third day I was number four and then the first day we went up from Creamers Field, we went up to ah University and ah goin along there, he spotted this truck, this dog spotted this truck that hauled him up there and he didn't wanna go. Until we made the big loop round Yankovitch Road and we come back down and when we passed where this truck was the truck wasn't there, then he started and he come home good. Well the third day I was number fourth, I'm just comin home, I saw a dog team ahead of me. Right in the middle of the road. Oh what am I gonna do! I got this dog that don't like me and don't obey me and I looked and there was another dog team ahead of her, and right ahead of her was the other dog team! That took care of number three, number two and number one. So I just holler at him and he just went around this, we only had one trail. He went round in deep snow, went around this dogs that's tangled and he went around the other one and then I went around the first, the last team and this girl said, Libby Westcott, she was the number one team, she says "Take out your whip!" I don't use a whip, I don't, I never use a whip when I drive dogs. I just use a little stick and I hit the bow, you know hit the, and I talk to them and sometimes I pray out loud or I sing out loud to them, let'em know that

I'm happy, you know, just happy to be out there. Ah, oh! But seriously when I came in first I was number one again. So I, I won three years, three years, of the number one. And so I retired ah, the trophy that they had for the women's three years and um then we could not keep dogs in town. We had no dog food. We're, I'm used to feeding dogs fish all the time. And I had a hard time feeding the dogs. And so we got rid of all our dogs. The next year, time to race again, because I was workin for wages by that time, I just had to get in so I borrowed dogs, and got in. That way I raced for fifteen years in Fairbanks until I got a cardinary attack and then the doctor made me quit. And the last year that I raced I had an attack six weeks before and the doctor told me "No more driving dogs, no more, you know take it easy." And all that stuff so I don't tell nobody I just kept on driving dogs and then the last day and they cut, I mean in the dog race, the last day of the three days, it started snow real bad, and ah, then ah my leader was getting in heat and I thought "Gee if I'm gonna have problem with that leader? I need that leader." I wanted her. And so I took these two big male dogs that was behind her, took them out of the team completely and went with the young pups cause the young pups I could handle better than adult dogs cause they wanted to stop and romance on the road. And so I pass all the dog teams, it was snowin just heavy and the one snow machine went ahead us and broke trail, but by that time there was no trail visible, you just, the dogs just know how to follow. And right in the chute, comin in the rast ... last curve the snow machine went off the old road and tipped into the deep snow and come back and kept on. So when I got to there I was home free, you know, I was first one comin in and I didn't see that where the snow machine went off the road and I hit that and tipped over and you know I had that attack just before that and I couldn't move my arm and I hang on with my right hand and I couldn't, I couldn't lift myself up. I lifted the sled up but I couldn't lift myself up so I just had to let go. And so I walked in. I was number one comin in the chute and had to walk in (laughter) and by that time they found out that I wasn't supposed to be doin that and so I got barred from the race and that picture you saw on the wall, that was taken after that, but then that was a passenger race where I had somebody else with me in case anything happen. But being by myself I cannot race in that racetrack again, without somebody with me. I ... that's the rules. And so that ended my career of racing and there was ah, in the fifteen, sixteen years I only missed one year. And it just really hurted me to miss that one year because it was the only time that I felt free. I felt like the King of the Road, you know! I just had no responsibility, just the pleasure of just goin along in the woods, smellin the fresh air and just bein out by myself, because when you have children all the time and workin for wages and stuff you don't have a minute to yourself. And we still didn't have running water at the house either. Had to pack all our water. Ok, what else?

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WS: Boy that's pretty good. Let's stop for a second.

EK: And I'm leavin lotta things behind.

WS: Go ahead.

EK: No, no!

WS: You say there's a lotta things involved?

EK: Ok there's a lotta things involved in racing. It's not just running the race. You have to think of all the things that could happen along the trail, like ah, I'm not gonna mention names. But this one woman she got in ahead of me. And she had a bunch of dogs because her father insisted she take a bunch of dogs. Well she lost ah, the trail start out like that and then turned around behind Creamers Field and she lost the dogs in here someplace. And I was the next comin up and I thought "Oh my God, what am I gonna do?", you know and um then I see, when I got closer I see the dogs sort of went off on their own and they were fighting and I thought "Oh", I just hollered my dog I say "Chicky! let's go Chicky! Let's go!" I just coax them, course I had my foot on the brake ready to stop too in case they try to join the fight. And um I kept on goin, oh I just, what a relief you know. But I know those dogs were fighting and because she lost the team and they were just on their own, nobody with them, and then that was the, that was really something that, you can't do nothin. You can't stop and help, the dogs are off the trail and what am I gonna do with my dogs if I stop the dog fight over here? And ah, when I got back to the chute then I find out that some men ran this way and some men went to Creamers Field and met them, and ah they had already killed a dog, but when I mentioned that to, to this girl's mother she said "Oh no, no, no no, this is how it is." So I just let it go, I seen it you know, so I just let her go. But when you're driving dogs, if you hear one dog yelp that's the ones the dogs gonna turn on, like "Ryyow!", something you know it will get caught? They'll turn on that, just that's the animal instinct in the dogs. And um then ah, one year ah there, I was right ahead of a woman from Kotzebue. She had twelve dogs, her husband came to race and I had, I had Chuck Albert's six dogs, see they're really big strong dogs. And I got in just for the fun of it and we still did not have ice brakes. And from this sled they just had a rope, you tie on to a stick, you know, if you wanna stop and right after we, we made this loop like that and comin back into town she caught up with me. So anytime a talk, a dog team catch up with you, you stop and hold your dogs the best of your ability and give her a clean pass. She never said nothin to her dogs, not hollered or encourage them or go or... the dogs stop and I heard, I hear a dog "Ruff!" And right away I pulled my sled over and I tie it to a stick and I went up

there and she just stop and held the brake and just stood there and the dogs was tangled up ahead so I ran up there and I see which dog was havin problems, he was just hollerin and I thought "Well if I don't do something they're gonna jump that dog." So I unhooked the back line and let it go and untangle them and straighten the dogs out and told her to go and she went. And so I went back and I was gonna untie my dogs from this stick and hold the sled back and untie it with one hand I couldn't reach the connection. I had a hard time but at least I was happy I saved that dog from getting hurt cause the rope was tied around its ankle and if the, they'd have to drag it, and so there's a lot of things you have to watch out for. Be courteous, helpful and ah watch out for the other team because this is like a car driving, you have to watch the other drivers too because they could run into you or something, where with dog team you have to watch the other people's dogs and watch your own and see how your dogs is doin and when I'm drivin dogs I don't ever take my eyes off the dogs. I watch their ear, I watch their movement, and ah then you understand just about what they're gonna do, or what they're thinkin of doing and it's ah, and it's ah just an exciting time.

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End of side one.

Side 2.

001

EK: Cause I was workin for sewing and ... . Like if you had a zipper broken I'll put a new zipper in there and you had ah pants that needs hemming I'll hem your pants and if you had a skirt that ah, that time lotta women wore dresses, I'll hem your skirt. I'll tear, you got a rip in your seam I'll fix it. And you got a something wrong with you, I'll fix it. And you got a zipper broken I'll put new zipper in your pants so I was doin all that at home an watchin my kids until ah, ah my daughter was ready for kindergarten. Because I had two kids, three kids after I moved to Fairbanks and when the last one was ready for kindergarten, well I quit workin at home and start workin for wages. And then when we moved out to Seven and a Half Mile and I had to hitch hike to work. Sometimes my husband would take me and most of the times I had to hitch hike but by that time the ... when we first moved out there there was a bus service so I used to catch the bus, but after three years the bus service quit and I had to hitch hike after that and ah my husband wasn't always available to bring me home Seven and a Half Miles after I get off work cause I had to get home to the kids and they were alone by that time and my kindergarten was in school just half a day and I had to make sure she got a babysitter and it was just

really hard, and then ah in 1980, 78 one time my husband, well not only one time but several times he never come home for three days at a time and one time I just got mad so I went to town and this girl was always telling me "Why don't I buy her house, why don't I rent her house?" You know the house is vacant and so she kept after me and ah no. So while I was mad I tell her "Ya, I'll rent your house." And so I went over to her house and it was just the house that I was thinking in my mind "I'd like to own some day." I'd like that little house there and I like the little log cabin next door to it and I said "Some day I'm gonna...." You know how you just dream and when you don't have no money? Cause everything I make goes back into like buyin kids clothes or by that time I, my boys wanted dog team again so I had couple dogs and as they were growing over, older I keep adding more till they had a whole string of dogs again, and um my gran, my youngest son was a really good musher and by that time he had eight good dogs. Well I had to feed those dogs too and so we went to this house and oh, I liked it! It's small but I like it. And so I tell her "I'll take it." And so my husband, my boss' husband he went over with me, and he started the furnace, he started the water, and I put oil in the tank, ya, oil in the tank and let it go three days and it was December by that time. And so one day my husband never come home again, so around four o'clock, well when the kids came home from school I told them, I said "Be ready!" See "I'm gonna send somebody out to get you kids. You put the bedding and the food and move over to that house." And then I called this neighbour, a friend of ours, dog musher. I tell him "You come out, pick me up from work." And so we went out and pick up the dogs in their truck and brought them and put'em above their house. And I just moved into that house. And I was scared. And by that time my husband come back, he says "Well how about me?" I said "Well that's up, up to you." And uh, so I moved into that house and it was, it was a new experience for me because I never done anything that, that's a lotta responsibility you know put, takin this rent on and with my, only, I was makin seventy dollars a week, seventy dollars a week and takin on this responsibility of renting a house and seeing that my kids ... so I told my husband he has to be home every night and pay for the oil bill and the light bill but I'll take care of the house. And he said "Yah." So he stayed with me and so I lived there one year, and golly the money was piling up. In rent. And this woman was still after me "Why don't you buy this house?" And I tell her "Well I just can't take the chance." And she said "I'll, I'll ah take the rent that you had paid for this past year, we'll put it down as a down payment and your payment to the bank will be the same as you been paying every month", and I was just scared. So I talk it over with my boss, she was a Japanese woman married to a white man. And he said "If you ever get stuck, I'll help you. Don't be scared." And he knows how hard I work all the time and so I says "Ok." So we filled out the papers and I kept on like paying rent except then I was paying for the house to be my own. And I give her two thousand under the table but she gave me one year to pay for that extra two thousand. So I gave her the two thousand under the table and I took care of the

rent and stuff by myself and that's how come I own that house I live in now. And I done it all with just my needle and thread and the determination to make something of myself and have a place for my kids to stay and ah we had our dogs yet and ah, this man that hauled me in, he had his dogs there too so his child was racing too. It worked out real good for us. Because we had transportation for our dogs and a place for our dogs to stay and I'm, I'm still there thirty, over thirty years later. That was in 78, and this is 33?

WS: 2001.

EK: That was 33 years ago ah? Ya. It'll be 33 years ago in December that I moved there. And those trees in my yard they weren't even there, but my grandson planted those trees in front of my yard. And ah sure been lotta changes and the neighborhood changed. It was just like ah, dog musher's, it was the poor end of town and now I'm the poor one in there, cause I still live ah live the way I always lived. I have a smokehouse in my yard and I got everybody's junk in there. You got your snowmachine, you pile it there. You got the old car, you pile it there. So my house is ah, it's welcome to everybody! And I'm not ashamed to say I do not lock my door. And anybody come in my house is welcome. You want coffee, it's there, but living in town I'm sorta, I feed lotta people! But I'm, I don't have the coffee pot ready every time you come in, in the morning! (laughs) It's just ah, when you're working out of the house you get out of the habit of having tea, something ready all the time. But right now I'm still feeding anybody that comes around and if you come to my house and it's close to meal time you'll stay and have fish or soup or moose or whatever. And tomorrow I'm gonna be cookin a porcupine while I'm canning salmon. Because I love canned salmon, especially by myself I just put'em in the small jar. So that there's enough for one person. Yesterday I opened three jars. People come in and catch us work, catch me work, ah eating breakfast. And ah it's, just because I'm old that doesn't mean that my life is dull. It's just still lotta activities because all my life I been active and doin something. So when my husband died twenty three years ago and I'm still, I'm still looking!! (laughing) You wanna be my husband? (laughing) Oh.

WS: Let me ah let me introduce one more topic and then we'll have the people a chance to, to talk about this. Ah, Effie you worked for a number of stores here in town right? Men's stores? Could you talk about that a little bit?

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EK: Well when I first started the job I was work in the laundry as a seamstress and then ah, something happened and I, I quit and I start workin for a alteration shop. And this alteration shop was doin the alteration for the stores and all the

stores was on Second Avenue that time. There was Sak's Men's Wear, Carr's Clothing Store, Pinska's, and Big Ray's. And you buy a pair of pants I'd hem it for you or, or take in the seam here or something. And I was working for the seamstress, as a seamstress there until my husband made me quit in 1974. Because that's when he started get sick, then we went back on the Yukon River but ah I was workin for, and then for two years I managed, I was manager of that shop while my, my boss went to Seattle while her husband gets her Ph. D degree. And so I ran the shop by myself and, and still I was getting seventy dollars a week. Even I was managing the place. But as long as, I'm used to workin for nothin right so I was just thankful for anything I could get. I still never talked back to my, talked back to anybody. And then working with her she was just a goofy girl, and she gave me courage and I started talkin back and that's when I started talkin to white people. Before that I wouldn't talk to white people. I wouldn't even argue with anybody because I was just used to takin it and not givin it back. And so, after I quit down there people still come to my house and I still was working every chance I got. So my life was ... I was always busy! I never ... I just never had time out. And the only time out I used to take was in September when it was hunting time. And that was my time to air out my brains. And I done that until ah oh gee about when? About eight, nine years. And I had killed, really by myself, I killed five moose and two bears, and I don't know how many caribou cause I had to hunt for my, feed my family too. And ah most of the time I went out just to get away, too, and my kids were all ... I raised my kids the way I was raised. I gave them responsibility. You take care of your dogs. You take care of the house. You help your sister take care of the house. You help your brother take care of the dogs. So everything went smooth I think. Now my grandkids of these kids that were so responsible they're not, they're not like their parents!

WS: Well there's lots more topics but we'll have to schedule another time and ...

EK: Too bad! (laughs)

WS: But I do wanna give people here a chance to ask you questions that they might have.

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LJ: I was wondering um during World War 2 were you still out on the Yukon River and did you notice differences in that time period around where you were living or if you came into Fairbanks.

EK: Well just before that my husband broke his leg so that was a big change in our life too because then my kids were also ah ready to go to school. So we were living

in town in 1941 when ah the war broke out and that's when there was start to be changes in our lifestyle, in our people, in their action and the women were getting more, they were getting more freedom, and the liquor was more handy for the native people so everything started change and the women start drinking and the men start, and the women start noticing all these GIs. And lot of our, our girls in Tanana moved up to Fairbanks and um then there was eighteen boys taken out of Tanana for the Army, they joined the Army, and so there was a lotta changes in everything. And we're also, jobs were available, they had CCC construction and you know for people and they got dollar an hour or something and um the, our lifestyle started change from there and by time 1948, well ah, even my husband moved to Fairbanks then. So our life really changed a lot after that time, the year. And we got our first radio then and it was just ah a different ... we had more money. We could eat different. And ah, but still I worked hard to keep the fish and things on the table. Went out rabbit hunting, went out puttin snares out for rabbits. Even down Tanana I was sewin for people but I never charged in those days. If you were have a hole in your boots I'd sew it up or you know stuff like that but I didn't get paid for it. I got paid probably in trade, like ah this one man, his wife had a baby and she was very sick so I took this premature baby and I kept it for them while his wife is sick and he gave me a moose ham, he gave me a whole hind quarter of a moose, and stuff like that. And ah, there was ah, I was always workin so people sort of felt sorry for me. Even right now um I got my freezer full of meat but it's mostly bones, like if you kill a moose and you debone your meat and you throw your bones away well I pick it up and I take what I want and that way I got meat all winter and this summer I loan somebody my freezer to use right in my backyard and I got King Salmon for it, you know for using my freezer and stuff like that so I'm still getting handouts. But then I also do something in return you know so it's still trading like we used to do all the time, trading, trading.

J?: I just had a short question. I was wondering what the name of the race was that you were in for sixteen years?

EK: What?

J?: What the name of the race was that you were in? The dog sled race?

EK: In Fairbanks?

J?: Ya the one that you were in ....

EK: Ah it had a that's when they first changed it to the North American Open Races and they still have the North American Open Races. But I think they, they were either thinkin of changing it to International or something because now we got

people from Switzerland and Germany and all over comin in to race and it's just not Fairbanks people anymore. Now it's too big for us to touch. You gotta have money.

S?: Did you have all your children in a hospital?

EK: Uh huh. Uh huh.

S?: And did you eventually have doctors to help you deliver your babies? Or was it always ...

EK: When I first started have children I just had a nurse because we're a government um hospital in Tanana and she was just the nurse and the second child I had a doctor and then after that I don't remember but there was doctor you know coming and going there, government hospital, a lot of them are good and some of them aren't, you know. And in little villages they have their own way. Ya I had all my kids in hospital down there and I only had one child in Fairbanks because they refused to have me any more down Tanana. Uh they said I was, I had, I lost a baby at birth there just before that and so they send me up here to have ah one of my children.

SR: How many children did you have?

EK: I had eleven all together. But three died in the first um, in the first part of my life, my first one, the third one, and about the fifth one. I had eleven kids altogether but only eight lived. And now I only have six left.

SR: Do they all live here in Fairbanks?

EK: One is in Mississippi right now. And the rest is around here.

MB: I was wondering, you mentioned that your sister was living with you, that you had to take care of your sister when you, right after you first got married?

EK: That's my wedding gift!

MB: Was your sister! I was, ah I was wondering how that came about.

EK: Well my mother was not very strong, she was sickly all the time and when I got married she just told me to take my sister that was five years old that day, the last of my father's children and so in that times everybody help each other. If you were married and ah this girl, child over here didn't have a home, you'd take the child or you'd help each other. We never let nobody go. And so when I got married

my mother said "Well, you have nothing to do now, just take her." So I kept her for ten years and um, when she was, after ten years my sister wanted her so she moved to Fairbanks then. By that time she was a teenager so she just went her own way after that. How bout you, my future husband! (laughs)

R?: Um ...

EK: I embarrass him? (laughs) How bout you?

WS: Well, can you hand me the microphone. Well one of the things Effie that keeps coming back to me is how you're a teacher and how you like to teach and how good you are with groups of people as a teacher. Um, when did you, when did you first realise that, that you had that quality as a teacher?

EK: Well, when I was in Eklutna, when I was growing up, I was always, I was the oldest of the family amongst the girls, so I was always had children under me. And when I was at Eklutna I was ah sort of, they find out that I was responsible and I wake up early and so I was ah on special call and then there was um, and then I always had a protective feeling towards the underdog. There's a child that don't look, unloved or nobody care for it, well I sort of been drawn to that child. And so I was always amongst kids and then when I got, came back from Eklutna I had my brothers and sisters to take care of and then I had my own children and even if I was working for wages I still had my kids and I always, my house is always open, like you had a baby and I take care of that baby. My sister had a baby, I took care of it for four months and then my sister had another child. I took care of that baby till she was about seven years old. So I was always had children. I was always givin orders to children and doin things for children so when I came to Fairbanks, this was ah, I don't know how many years I was in Fairbanks and uh, then the Native Association used to get me to tell stories to kids in Fairbanks. Oh that was hard! Because their, sometimes their white mother used to come and that was just ah, made me feel like I wasn't good enough, you know. I always felt like I wasn't good enough, I wasn't good enough, and um so I done that for awhile but I didn't like these younger people that were getting wages being over me and I was doin this for nothin and ah that went on for awhile and then I quit because this one girl that I know that did not know, you know she wasn't raise with responsibility or nothin telling me you know this and that. And I didn't want nobody to tell me anything. Cause I lived by experience and I experienced the whole lifestyle and uh so I quit that and ah I start sewing and I sewed for twenty years. And when my husband died, that is, that's when I start getting back to teachin native education with pay. And that's how I got started with ah with ah doing it with pay and lotta times I still do it just... I do lotta things without askin you know for pay and sometimes they pay me good and sometimes they don't but right now, last week, I went to ah Jory?

school and I talk to bunch of kids and so I thought "I'm just gonna ask." So I call the head office and I ask em "Ok I done this. Do I get paid or not? So when my ... gonna do?" And she said "Call me back tomorrow." And they did pay me for that ah time that I spent with those kids because I was helping the college student that was learning to be a teacher? I was helping her so there's different things where I'm, I can get paid for and some I just don't even bother to turn in. And um so I talk to college people, I talk to children, I talk to teenagers, I talk to the Native Association teen groups and like I say, lotta times it's just, just donation work, but I sort of like it. It gives me great pleasure in talking to children and right now I know they really appreciated me since ah, since this ah eleventh of September thing. I have a flag on my desk and I, we talk about the flag, the importance of the flag and the love that we should share for each other. And ah what we appreciate about the flag, what the flag mean and then I give them all a hug, I shake their hand, I give them all hug, I tell every one of my children I love them and they just need that. They really need that because lotta those kids are troubled too and they're, they really don't know, they don't understand what's goin on around them. And they need that little security of somebody sayin "I love you." And ah, but I quit my job now because I just couldn't, I get too tired and this one day I was workin I just got sort of dizzy and nauseated and I just barely finished my, my, my time and then I thought "That's it!" So I quit. Tomorrow it'll be two weeks. I been sick since then and it's just, and my hip hurting so much the doctor says it's the stress of my hip is affecting my heart and uh, I don't know, so I just think, at eighty two I'm gonna retire. But I love my job, I love what I'm doin. And ah ... In my job I, these kids would look at these tools and the conversation will go from there and there'll be one hour and they'll just be so interested in everything. I got the moose bladder and moose heart skin and fish skin bag and caribou leggins and just whatever ... it interest them very much. And I got the wooden plates and wooden spoons and I don't know, just play house.

WS: Effie, thank you very much. This is, I think you've given all of us here something very special, um, a sense of your life and a sense of the history and um, that's really precious. We appreciate it. Thank you. Massi!

EK: Are we through now and Patty never came?

WS: (Laughs)

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End of side 2

Salt Bellies

soak 2 nights (before cookin·)

continually change water

before makin· pickled fish, sock one nights

change water

trim edges (di

cut in strips — (about 10 pieces)

Effie's Pickled Fish

3 parts water (cups?) / 3 Tbs. brwn. sugar ~~vinegar~~

2 parts vinegar

(never before written down) - 1½ min. -

bring just to boil, let it set (cool)

1 onion (sliced)

about 3 rnd. tbs. picklin· spices

stir, cover w/ picklin· solution

put in refrig

stir occasionally

jar next day

Keep refrigerated 3 days in jars

(vinegar has chance to "cook" it)

to fill medium - lg· mixin· bowl