

Stacey Carkhuff and Polly Hyslop interviewing Oscar Albert
Northway, Alaska, October 11, 2008
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POLLY HYSLOP: She wants to know about highway. You help build highway?

OSCAR ALBERT: Yea.

POLLY HYSLOP: Tell her about it.

OSCAR ALBERT: Well, of course when the road came through.

POLLY HYSLOP: How old you are? How old you are?

OSCAR ALBERT: Gee, I don't know.

POLLY HYSLOP: Young boy?

OSCAR ALBERT: Yea, not too old. I can't find it in my mind, it's been a long time, I don't know.

POLLY HYSLOP: You live right here when road go?

OSCAR ALBERT: We live in Northway, you go out ? and start coming back, old town. Right back there. We come back here with dogs. Old Northway before the road. I've been doing it. You come down....? Look, look look! Highway coming! Cat...They come back here and go all the way out to ?.

POLLY HYSLOP: When you see cat, what you think? You?

OSCAR ALBERT: They tell us oh, road coming. Oh, that road, that truck. We come back here. First time we see truck.

POLLY HYSLOP: First time you see truck? First time you see truck? That's the first time you've seen a truck?

OSCAR ALBERT: ? Afternoon. Come back by river.

POLLY HYSLOP: Where you live? Here at Fish Camp?

OSCAR ALBERT: We live in Northway.

POLLY HYSLOP: Oh, Northway. Oh ok.

OSCAR ALBERT: ? For hunting, dogs for each person, we here. I lived over Moose Creek.

POLLY HYSLOP: They talk to you? Those people when they work?

OSCAR ALBERT: Oh, we don't have ? We don't even go out there. ? Until the road come through, we said. Pretty soon the road was up this way. We got every day, we had a visitor.

POLLY HYSLOP: Those people, they're nice...Those people, highway people, G.I Army people, they're nice to you?

OSCAR ALBERT: Yea. Every day. Increasingly ? come back.

POLLY HYSLOP: How about airport? You work on airport? Did you work on airport when they build airport?

OSCAR ALBERT: Oh, yea. 1941, 1939. ? Airport in 1940 we start work, cut brush. No chainsaw. Logs this big. We cut them up in pieces and drug them out and burned them.

POLLY HYSLOP: How much you paid?

OSCAR ALBERT: 25 cents an hour, and we worked 12 hour days!

POLLY HYSLOP: My goodness.

OSCAR ALBERT: Night shift we took over. 24 Hour. Day and night. When they finished the day work, the night shift would take over. All night. War time.

POLLY HYSLOP: War time. How about where you work- there's grave site there, right? Where the airport, they have grave site there for Indian people, right? You remember that? Where they bury people.

OSCAR ALBERT: Oh, This here airport. You see white bone on sandbar. The people, they burn them up there from Tetlin?

POLLY HYSLOP: Oh, Ok.

OSCAR ALBERT: We sung, Old time. ? You worked year around.

POLLY HYSLOP: How many army people around here? How many Army people stay here?

OSCAR ALBERT: Where?

POLLY HYSLOP: When they camp here. Did they camp here?

OSCAR ALBERT: Airport, they come in, 8 thousand. Any time you go out to work, somebody's there. We worked. If you don't work, they throw you in the Army and you gotta fight. So we got to work.

POLLY HYSLOP: You work? You don't want to go Army?

OSCAR ALBERT: Me, I don't care. (Laughs). I'd take any thing. I'd take a chance. Some people don't like it, but.

POLLY HYSLOP: Who? (Upper Tanana) Who don't like it?

OSCAR ALBERT: Oh, lots of people. ? You can't stop it.

POLLY HYSLOP: About you. You're the first one to own a car?

OSCAR ALBERT: Oh, after road come through here, I worked and about 45, 44, FAA, One guy he moved to Yakutat and doesn't know what to do with his car. I go off and buy.

POLLY HYSLOP: How much?

OSCAR ALBERT: \$850. Everything's cheaper then. Big Plymouth. My friend, Army was driver for them. I always like him. We come back from Tok and he [step on ?] down there, the Tanana bridge. Says Oscar, I going to get ? We got along me and driver. OK, just like I been driving 10 years. Ever since I shut my eyes, ?. First one here that got car.

POLLY HYSLOP: First one, huh?

OSCAR ALBERT: Yep.

STACEY CARKHUFF: What did he say he paid for it?

POLLY HYSLOP: He said \$850.00, Plymouth.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Do we know what year it was?

POLLY HYSLOP: What year your car, what year?

OSCAR ALBERT: 1939.

POLLY HYSLOP: 1939 Plymouth. Where is it now?

OSCAR ALBERT: I sell that one, and buy another one! Only Indian have a car, got no brain when they driving. I had never seen a car in my life. That's me, you know.

POLLY HYSLOP: He would still drive today, if he could.

OSCAR ALBERT: And, of course, first sno- go to come to country. First one, brand new. I buy it.

POLLY HYSLOP: First sno-go. \$1400.00.

OSCAR ALBERT: Still in the box? \$1400. So car and sno-go both I buy. Of course then [I have all my strength.]

POLLY HYSLOP: You hunt and you trap before highway? Where you hunt and you trap?

OSCAR ALBERT: Back here. Every year until '77. Some people run up ? big trail, a mile long, I think to myself I quit. I go along highway to trap. To a quarter mile to then ? Creek are on top of highway.

POLLY HYSLOP: Before highway, before highway, how you get around?

OSCAR ALBERT: Dog team, Walk.

POLLY HYSLOP: That's all? That's it? Dog team and you walk? Where are...Trails out there?

OSCAR ALBERT: oh, we got trails.

POLLY HYSLOP: Oh, Ok.

OSCAR ALBERT: We got summer trail right through there, through village. Over down by Moose Creek, that's where we got big place that we walk all the way over...?

POLLY HYSLOP: Where they build highway, they come to village and meeting first, or they just do it? The Army people.

OSCAR ALBERT: [They're full of it] all the time.

POLLY HYSLOP: [Tseni - thankyou]

OSCAR ALBERT: And then Army we work with them. We haul lumber from ? to the 20 mile sign up the creek. Every day, you were allowed gloves. Two pair a day. That lumber, the rough lumber tears up gloves. Two pair a day we, load up truck- lumber. All the airport.

POLLY HYSLOP: Lumber, like a lumber mill and they were building like the airport. With Lumber, what you build?With lumber, what you build at airport?

OSCAR ALBERT: Build house for workers. Army. Big town out there, oh they tear it down, I don't know why. [took us a long time?]

POLLY HYSLOP: Gee!

OSCAR ALBERT: I'm too old- too old to tear it down.

POLLY HYSLOP: How long they stay here? How long, how many years they stay in Northway?

OSCAR ALBERT: Oh gee, well, 1947 I'm still working, and some were still there. [?] Road and some workers, Army. [They go live somewhere else, there's nobody]. All over.

POLLY HYSLOP: Yea.