

Stacey Carkhuff and Polly Hyslop interviewing Lavell Wilson  
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**LAVELL WILSON:** Well, I was born in Freewater, Oregon in 1937 and started grade school in Palouse Washington, it's about 60 miles south of Spokane Washington. My dad came to Alaska, I'm not quite sure what year, somewhere between '39 and '41, and he got acquainted with Oscar Albert and lets see, I read that Oscar had a deal written up in '42, '41, he met my dad in Delta, of course there was no road then, so he'd gone down by boat and my dad came back with him to Northway from Delta and they started trapping together in the early 40's. Of course we still lived out in Washington then, the rest of the family. My dad finally came out in '48, late '48 and he moved us up here in '49. He'd been living at Northway for quite a few years, mainly trapping and he did little...He worked for Herman Kessler, setting up the mill there, well he set up the mill I think. Oh, actually, "Old man Denny" what was his name?

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Tom Denny?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Tom senior did most of the logging, he had a crew and logged up the Chisana River, and they pulled the logs down to the mill there which was right across from the bridge you know where it used to be.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Actually, I don't know where the mill is- was.

**LAVELL WILSON:** You don't? Well, you go down the hill there and across the Chisana River, and then just about a half a mile on the left side, its mostly washed away now, that's where Herman's old place was, the store, and the mill sat right there on the edge of the river.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Oh, OK.

**LAVELL WILSON:** But, uh, we spent the first winter right there. My uncle had a little, I think it was about 12x12 shack here, and we spent the winter in that.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** How many of you?

**LAVELL WILSON:** There were six of us, four of us kids and mom and dad. They had a bed in there, and all of us slept on the floor and yeah, it was pretty...Because we didn't get here until late in September of '49 is when we arrived, we were broke down on the Alaska Highway for two weeks one time, the transmission went out, then they sent for parts to Dawson, back to Dawson Creek and they sent the wrong parts. So we were held up for about two weeks on the road before we finally got here. I remember when we got here, my dad said "We have \$60 left." And we were facing winter, you know, so yeah we had a pretty tough winter, but we did fine. Of course my dad knew almost all the Native people because he had been living there for years, and I still remember Walter Northway

bringing us fish and ducks and dried meat. He wasn't the only one, Oscar of course, and a lot of them. Of course we caught fish too; my dad had a net in the creek there, and before freeze up we caught some ling cod out of the Chisana, there used to be a lot of them. But anyway, the next year he would walk up from the highway there, where the Motel, the Northway Motel was now and he took out a trading and manufacturing site there and built a little house there and we moved up there the next year off of the main highway. As far as me, any history of me, I grew up there, went to grade school in Northway, I think I was in the 4th grade, I can't remember, anyway I went to the 8th grade there and being there was no high schools around, even Tok, we went to Sheldon Jackson in Sitka for four years, that was around when the Presbyterian Church, which was a really good high school. That's where I learned what it's like to be a minority. The year I went there it was 156 students, 6 of us were white- Honkies, man. The rest were all Aleuts, Eskimos, Athabascans, Tlingits, Haidas, Tshimshians, but anyway, I think when I graduated in '56 there was like 16 white kids in there. Most Native kids especially with this area, from some reason went to Mount Edgumbe, which is right across the channel from Sitka. So, that's where Kenny Albert went, in Sitka, but he graduated the year I went down there I think. That was run by the BIA, Sheldon Jackson was run by the Church, Presbyterian Church, and of course it cost money to go there but it was still reasonable. But anyway, after I graduated from high school, I went one year at the University of Alaska, and then that summer Katherine and I were married, in '57, and we went to Brigham Young for two years and then I figured well, we'd stay out here and try to get enough money to go back, that never did happen.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** What would you have gotten a degree in, had you been able to finish it?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Well, I started out in pre-med, but I found out right away without some money or serious backing, you weren't going to get into any kind of a medical school or anything. So I switched to general courses, and I was also taking air force ROTC so I would have probably went into the air force you know, for a stint. But I never did finish, so. So then I started working construction mainly to survive, and ended up doing a little bit of everything, but I retired out of the Operating Engineers. I started flying with 40 Mile Air, when, about '81, hon?

**KATHERINE WILSON:** '81 or '82 you worked for RCA for 13 years here, and then you went into the legislature for two years.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** But you basically grew up, or stayed in Tok after you came back from Brigham Young.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Uh hm, yeah. Well we lived around Northway for a couple years, her folks had the Lake View Inn down there you know, Katherine's folks. Yeah, we spent a couple of years around there, working construction on the road and went from one thing to another, and then I got a job when they build those microwave sites.

**KATHERINE WILSON:** The DEW Line?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Well, its actually called White Alice, I got a job building them, and then after they were built, I got a job working there as a mechanic and then they transferred me into Tok, and that was in '60.

**KATHERINE WILSON:** February of '61.

**LAVELL WILSON:** '61.

**KATHERINE WILSON:** February of '61.

**LAVELL WILSON:** So we've been living right in Tok since '61. And then like I said, I went into the legislature for a couple of years, '70-'72.

**KATHERINE WILSON:** You were elected in '72.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Oh, '72-'74.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Oh, so you dabbled in politics for a while.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yeah, you want to ever find out who your friends are, get into politics. The most thankless thing you'll ever do in your life. You're a great guy until the day after you're elected, then you're one of them thieving' no good damn politicians. It happens overnight, there's nothing you can do. But anyway, I enjoyed it, but I didn't campaign very hard to go back I think I lost by 150 votes or something. Anyway, it was and education. And I started flying for a living, in um...

**KATHERINE WILSON:** November of '81.

**LAVELL WILSON:** '81.

**KATHERINE WILSON:** A mechanic- you were a mechanic and then you went into flying.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Also I have an aircraft mechanic's license. I did a little guiding in between, mostly in the Northway area, and the Tok area. And I worked on jobs all around here you know, as far north as, up the highway, Chicken and toward the border, and Delta.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** But you must remember your dad talking about it, when the road was coming through, because so far we've basically asked elders in Northway, like Oscar Albert, and Julius Sam, and Ada Albert, and just their response to the road, and then we talked today with Ellen Dimet and Laura Sanford. And it's, and I got a feeling that they weren't...They were told and they supported the road and their Chiefs and their leaders supported the road, um, I haven't really heard anything real negative about the impact of the road, or the road coming through. But, do you remember anything that your dad

shared about the road? Because I know they, the Natives had contact with the outside world through radio so they knew there was a war.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Well I know that Chief Peter of Tetlin was one of the big supporters, he encouraged the guys to go to work on the road, and get a job. As far as Northway, I don't know. I know some of them did work on the road.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Did your dad?

**LAVELL WILSON:** No, my dad got drafted when he was working there for Herman, he was hauling stuff and running the mill, setting it up and whatever. So he got drafted into the army, so he was gone for a few years, and of course the military put the road in, you know, they pioneered it, is what it amounted to. And they take credit for it, but actually 70% of it was going to end up being re-routed and that by the Civilian, I can't think of the name of it now. It was the fore runner to the department of transportation, the T.A. It doesn't come now.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** Public Roads Administration?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Public Roads, PRA, Public Roads Administration. They came right behind the army, and were widening it, and re-routing it in places, in fact I remember hearing there was quite an argument between the military generals and some of the PRA people, because the PRA refused to follow some of the routes that the military pioneered. Well, it wasn't, they didn't think it was the right way- thought it was too hard, there was a better route, you know. But the military, of course most of the road here, that we're talking about, the Alaska Highway, and of course all of the cutoff was all built by the black battalion. I don't know if you've ever seen this book, "Black Regiment." This sign is taken from the bridge across the Slana River going toward the Nabesna mines right here. This is the old road, of course. This is Slana Alaska, Nabesna 44 miles that way, they started right here, and went up the hill, and by Duffy's and all the way to Tok. And this has got all kinds of good pictures, a lot of Northway, but these are all, they, crossing the river here, the Tanana, you know where the old river road is?

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Yea.

**LAVELL WILSON:** That's where the road went when they come across. Here's the bridge they build across the Tanana there on the river road in the early days. Remember the road used to cross here, and go around and come around back up by the Tanana River.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** Ripping those huge trees out.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yea, jammed up. But then they built the big bridge across the Tanana in '44 and '45, it wasn't open until late '45. But anyway, this black outfit, what was the name of it?

**POLLY HYSLOP:** It doesn't say there.

**LAVELL WILSON:** 97th.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Oh, the 97th.

**LAVELL WILSON:** The 97th Engineers, all black outfit. They pioneered all the Alaska Highway that we're familiar with. Of course from here to Delta, that's the only part of the road that I know of that was not pioneered by the military, the PRA pioneered that. They came up from Slana after these guys punched the road in here, and then they started up toward Dot Lake up toward Tanacross, and the army, as far as I know, come to find out, never did pioneer that stretch. They just did from Tok, actually Slana, then Tok, and from Tok all the way to Dawson Creek, it was all pioneered by the army. But this stretch from Tok to Delta was done by PRA. And they had a big camp at Tanacross early on, and then when the PRA moved in behind the army, they set up in Tok, and in Tok it was called the Million Dollar Camp. They had a hospital, 300 man mess hall, they had big warehouses, machine shops, all kinds of stuff. It was amazing. And they built it in a big hurry. I've got several books here that talk about, one guy came here and he landed in Tanacross, he was on a convoy coming up, and they got to Whitehorse and couldn't- the road was impassable, so they flew him to Tanacross and he hitchhiked back to Tok, and the outfit he worked for had a camp at Midway Lake, you know where the old house is there?

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Yeah.

**LAVELL WILSON:** And there were PRA people and he talks about after he was down there for two or three months, he came back to Tok and couldn't believe his eyes; all these buildings, hundreds of guys, they were working on the road, you know. Widening it, and improving it. It affected the, well even the...look at every time you go by Dot Lake, look at how the road affected Dot Lake. Dot Lake was where they set up a camp, one of the PRA contractors, [Ebinol] or something I can't remember the name of it right now. But, the Native village was way over on the road. And they pioneered the road in there, and of course they'd go over there and visit the Natives and stuff, and the Natives all ended up moving over on the highway, where they had access. Before, their access was the river, you know. With the road they could go to Delta or whatever a lot easier. In fact that guy that headed that company became a God father to Peter Charles's daughters. Carl was telling me about it, I got a book that's got pictures of them even in there. Anyways, that's why Dot Lake became a village, it was originally not a village. But it worked out, you know. Northway is the same way, essentially. You know, it was on the river, their road was the river- everybody's was, that's the only way back in them days.

**KATHERINE WILSON:** Tanacross too.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yea, of course Tanacross moved over not because of the road, but because of the telegraph line. The military had a three man telegraph crew there at Tanana Crossing, and Hudson Stuck, the preacher, the "Archdeacon of the Yukon" they called him, Episcopalian preacher he encouraged the Natives from Mansfield to move

over to Tanana Crossing, because he figured that was going to be the focal point, that would be the point that would develop. Although at the time he thought it would develop because it was right on the river with the steamboats and stuff. And there were not very many steamboats that got up this far- they did, some of them got clear up, way up the Nabesna River. But Northway, you know the Northway Airport was started before the war broke out, which is a lot of people don't know that. And the first people to work there, actually was, what's his name, Bob Reeve's landed in Tetlin, picked up a crew in Tetlin and took them up there, and landed on the river there, and then they started clearing off a spot for the runway, and then a lot of Northway people went to work there.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Now, it was built a few years before the road. Now why was it, if the road was such an emergency basis, the highway, or the airstrip was built before the road, there must have been some kind of...was there a connection between the airstrip being built and the road?

**LAVELL WILSON:** No, there wasn't, which is kind of amazing. They were getting, you know it started to look like war with Japan, so they decided to start building some airports where they could ferry some planes up here to protect Alaska so they actually started Northway before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, that fall of '41. And then after Pearl Harbor, they said oh, we've got to have more than just airports, we've got to have a road, you know, and Northway airport was pretty well all built by the time the road came through.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** Wasn't it kind of an extension of the Northwest Staging Route?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Right.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** They added to it to Alaska.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yeah, the interesting thing is, that's why Northway and Tanacross- two airports, and they're only by air, 50 some miles apart. Which is unusual, most of them are 100, 200 miles apart, well when the war broke out, Northway was just in the early stages of being built, the only way they could build it was they'd bring stuff up to Slana go into the old Nabesna mine, then ferry it by airplane down the river. Actually they cat trained some stuff down the river, in the winter, but in fact it was the biggest airlift of it's time, hauling all that stuff from the Nabesna mine, which is called Reeve Field, it's down on the river to Northway. They flew, I forget, 500 barrels of tar to pave the runway, you know. So anyway, they were worried they weren't going to get that built in time and the war broke out so they just punched the road on through to Tanacross and started building Tanacross because they knew it was going to end up on the road, and then they thought they could get it done before Northway because they weren't sure how long it would take Northway, because everything, people, supplies, everything had to be flown in, where Northway- or Tanacross, as soon as they opened up that stretch across from well, actually the road turned around Seven Mile you know, when you cross Tanacross. They were starting to haul out of Valdez, all the supplies. My dad, I've got a picture of my dad's truck, he'd written on the bottom, "First load to Tanacross" it's an old

single axle truck with a huge stack of lumber on it, big timbers and stuff, I think it was probably for one of the hangars. Anyway, that's why they ended up with two dog-gone airports so close together. Once the army went by Northway, then of course they punched the road over to the airport for access, but it was not in the plan. Obviously they would have probably put it in a different place because that Northway valley is pretty boggy, millions of lakes and you know it's not the place to build roads particularly, that's why the road stays on the hill.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** That reminds me, how was the road decided; who had engineered the road?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Well, the army had surveyors that went ahead with the crews and their basic concern was what kind of ground it was, you know. They tried to stay where it was solid, the most difficult stretch of the road in the whole highway was the stretch from Beaver Creek to White River. That's a bottomless bog, and of course they didn't know nothing about building in these kinds of conditions, so the first thing they did was strip it off. You know what happened then- they called it the "Grand Canyon of the Alaska Highway." I've seen pictures of trucks and cats just mired down, it'd turned to you can just imagine just a bottomless... And then they had to go corduroying it, changing it around and you know they said, "Oh, the army punched the road through in '42." Yea, they punched a road through in '42, and they actually drove a couple trucks all the way through in the winter of '42 when it was frozen, they drove right across Kluane Lake. They didn't have a bridge yet. Well, as soon as it thawed out in the spring, for two more years, you couldn't drive the highway. It just wasn't passable. It wasn't passable, really until about '44, and even then it was marginal. When they finished the Tanana River bridge in '45, a couple guys drove out, that worked on the road here. One of the first ones to drive a car, one of the foremans from one of the PRA drove back to Clear Lake Iowa. A lot of the contractors came from Iowa because [Lionel Green] had the contract for this end of the highway, and they subbed it out to all these little contractors from all over Iowa, a lot of them were from Clear Lake Iowa. And each one had 20 miles, 50 miles, you know, and so forth, bridges. And they just managed it, of course it was cost plus deal, you know, you couldn't really lose money. The government was paying for it all. But ah, it affected Northway, in the first thing that happened was most of the people moved across the river- you know they originally were on the other side, most of them.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Yea, they said it was the flood.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yea, well that too.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** But, but then they could, its easier to get to work, they started. Basically before then, they had the trappers that would sell their furs to the trappers and get cash perhaps but when they, this is when their cash economy really started. Yea.

**LAVELL WILSON:** So they were all on the other side originally, that's where St. Timothy's Mission was an everything, the BIA school on the other side so they all moved on this side which made it a lot more convenient for them, not having to get across the

river. Haul everything across by boat in the summer, wait for freeze-up in the winter and somebody was always falling through. We were going out bear hunting on the Nabesna bar, which is down on the river, we call it the bar, so we drove into Nabesna mine and we were going to hike down there, go down the river and hunt. And there was an old English man there, that was the caretaker of the mine, the old Nabesna mine, and some of the Natives from Northway worked there, you know in the early days before the road. Oscar worked there, and that was a big mine back in them days, a hard rock mine, they mined heavy metal and many different minerals, gold, primarily. But anyway, we had Steven Northway. It was my dad, me and Steven Northway, I was about 15 I guess, and ah, we stopped there, and visited with him, his name was Harry Boyden he's an old English man, and he told us where the trail was going down there, and some of the Natives lived down there on the bar, and he said, "That gal," and pointed to some gal, "Lena, she's headed down there now you can just follow her." And she had a big pack on and she takes off down the trail. She likely killed us! She never let up, getting further and further ahead, she was about 19 or 20 back then, I think. Mighty tough. She ended up being a dog musher and all kinds of stuff she'd do. Very energetic, outdoors kind of gee wiz. But some of them, some of the John's is it that lives there. I can't, I'm not real familiar with them but anyway, they had a little village down there, they used to be on down at Cooper Creek, which is down about 10 miles. But I go into that a little bit, what Natives did exist in the Upper Tanana. Any further than Tanacross wasn't considered Upper Tanana.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** How about Healy Lake?

**LAVELL WILSON:** They weren't considered Upper Tanana. I wondered about that myself.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Beaver Creek was, wasn't it? Or no.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Beaver Creek:

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Well, it probably didn't exist back then.

**LAVELL WILSON:** No. I don't think it did. Beaver Creek this way you mean?

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Through Canada.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Oh, yea, you know I'm not sure what was at Beaver Creek.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** I don't think anything was there- except people moved in from Scottie Creek and stuff.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Yea, the Scottie Creek Indians.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** After the highway.

**LAVELL WILSON:** I know the Scottie Creek band roamed both sides, you know. And some of them took Canadian citizenship, and some of them have dual citizenship. I know my dad used to buy fur, you know when he lived there in Northway when he had the store in the fort, he always got a kick out of Bill Johnson of the Scottie Creek band, if fur was selling high over here, they were Americans, you know, if fur was selling higher over there or the coyote bounty was over there, or a wolf bounty, you know, they were Canadians. They weren't no dummies. So, Bill John actually ended up moving to Northway in later years and the customs when we came in '49, the customs was right at the border, Canadian customs, you know where the American customs is now? You go down the hill, go across the flat, then you go up the first hill right there was the Canadian customs office. And they kept saying move the American customs up to the border! And they wouldn't do it. The customs people, they didn't want to live out there- they wanted to live in Tok, where you had a little bit of civilization, and of course all of us that lived in between, we fought it tooth and nail trying to get it moved to the border because it was a real problem. You'd go over to Canada, we'd go over to Beaver Creek sometimes and shop, there used to be a store down there that we'd go to and we'd haul lumber from there. And invariably, when we'd come back into the US, they'd make us come all the way to Tok.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Oh my goodness! From Northway.

**LAVELL WILSON:** They'd see the papers, and then drive back to Northway.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Drive another hour. Two hours living in Northway.

**LAVELL WILSON:** And the final thing happened when Katherine and I come back from, one year we come back from college at Brigham Young and Katherine, we had one kid then, Nicky, she was a baby, and Katherine had been sick for a couple of days, and I was driving trying to get here, we got into Alaska, we got to Northway and pulled into her folk's place and well we're just whipped from that road, broke, she wasn't feeling too good. So we just took it easy for a few days, and about three or four days later, I was over in Northway and that's when Floyd Miller ran the store over there, and he was a customs guy, and I happened to notice that customs sign. I said "Oh, gee, I forgot to check into customs!" And he said "uh, oh, I'll check you in, but they might not like it." So he checked me in and I didn't think much of it, so what about a month later we get this letter, how much were they fining us?

**KATHERINE WILSON:** I don't know. 2005

**LAVELL WILSON:** \$5,000? And \$400.00 For each person that was in the car, her and the kid, we had \$40.00, maybe. "Payable right now." Illegal entry into the, into Alaska. Man I was really panicked, of course I was pretty young then and didn't know much, but down at the bottom it said if you feel there's extenuating services, you can write the director of customs. So I wrote this big sob letter and a week or two later, I got this thing that said, well they looked at my case and we ended up paying a \$50.00 fine I think it was. But boy I hated it, I really hated it then, it was a real hardship on people, especially

they Native people, of course they mostly ignored it, but they could get away it. You now. I Could have gotten away with it too if I'd have just kept my big mouth shut. But you know, trying to be legal...They didn't I know I came in to Alaska. But anyway, nowadays I suppose, Native people they go to Kluane to visit relatives or whatever they can go through the hassle of customs just like anybody else but just think what it would be like if customs was still at Tok! I'd be a real pain in the but, but that's the way it was for a lot of years.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** When did it move?

**LAVELL WILSON:** hmm, when? The Canadians stayed there for a while, and beings that the Americans wouldn't move, then the Canadians said, "Well he with it, they're moving back to Beaver Creek." When they did I don't know, I would guess about early 50's. But when the customs here moved, let's see, we were in Tok. Sometime in the 60's. It finally moved to the border where it belonged.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Since you basically, or, you know a lot of the history since the purchase of Alaska, what do you think is the single most, the single biggest impact on Native way of life? Since the purchase? I know that the Native people were already into a cash economy when the road came through, but since the road came through, would you say that the change came just incredibly faster?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Oh, yea, well it definitely did. The Army of course Northway had a big Army contingent there at the airport, so they got subjected to a lot more, a lot quicker then like Telin and places like that. Because there was a lot of Army there, a lot of facilities and of course you know they weren't always welcomed some of them facilities either. You know, it was not like there was between the blacks and the whites, but there was a lot of animosity at some parts against anybody that wasn't white. You know, my God look at the Japanese citizens during the war. But anyway, Northway got subjected to it a little worse than...In some ways it was better for them, I guess, it brought them up quicker, but in some ways it was worse. There was, you know they got introduced to tobacco, of course they had their own type of tobacco, alcohol for one thing, and stuff like that, which they weren't prepared for by any means. But I don't know the single biggest impact, that'd be hard to say I don't know. You know their...their, probably just the impact on their culture. All of the sudden they're supposed to be integrated into another culture. That don't take place overnight, you know. Religion, you know, preachers showed up. And all them G.I's chasing all them girls, you know, they got, I mean there had to be an impact there. Right way you start getting half breed kids, you know, nobody was prepared to handle that particularly, and of course a lot of them, as soon as the Army got transferred a lot of the kids were left here. They weren't necessarily taken with them like now, you get a couple together they're pretty much like anybody else. But back then...I don't know, that was...I know the religion too, like for instance one of the first preachers to come down after the road came in was a gentleman by the name of Bert Bingle. He was a Presbyterian minister. They called him the "Big church builder" in Alaska, he built five different churches. He actually originated in Cordova, and one day brought the colonists up to Matanuska Valley, they sent him up in

'35 to be a minister for the Matanuska Valley colonists. Which he was. Anyway he ended up building a church in Tok here and as soon as the road opened in...even practically before he was on the road here ministering to the people on the road and the Natives. And I remember talking about Bingle once to Charlie David. And he said, "Yeah, that's the first time I ever realized how religion impact their culture too." Said Bingle would come to Tetlin and he said one time they came over there and rounded up five couples and made them all get married. Including Charlie and Ellen. I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah." Of course they were married as far as they were concerned, but it didn't suit the white man's idea of religion you know. So I'm sure that that had to happen. The impact socially on the Native people I mean...

**POLLY HYSLOP:** And the disease, Auntie Ellen was talking about 1940's, was it 1946 when Healy Lake was basically hit by diphtheria or something. I'm not sure, but they were all scattered, they all had to move. And she came, she and her husband came to the highway. But the disease that followed the Native people. People didn't have immunity.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Ellen you mean?

**POLLY HYSLOP:** Ellen Dimet. Yeah.

**LAVELL WILSON:** She used to babysit our kids. She's quite an institution too.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** She is. 96 Years old, she is now.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Boy is she tough, boy she had some tough times too.

**POLLY HYSLOP:** I'll tell ya.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yeah, not only disease like diphtheria and smallpox and that, but venereal disease. You know, like I said, all them young G.I's and all them young Native girls. You know they were plying them with booze and gifts and everything. Its just the way it happens. The military didn't pay much attention to it. The only thing the military did, they wouldn't let the black soldiers go into any of the villages or associate with any of them to speak of, it talks about that in here, these are all black guys here. In fact they interviewed one of the elders in Mentasta years ago, asking him about the first white men he saw, and he said well he'd heard of a few white man had been through down there, but the first white men he really saw were black.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** Yea, I've heard that. That's a very recurring story.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Of course, that would have been probably some these guys, you know coming through here. They wouldn't, they would always make them camp away from any village.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** That's too bad. I was also wondering um, after they re-organized the road and put it in and everything, what about hunting? How did that affect patterns and migrations and everything?

**LAVELL WILSON:** Well, I don't think it did much. Because the caribou, you know it never was a main caribou migration area. And near, even before the white men came, a lot of the Native people like Northway and Tetlin had to go clear to Ketchumstock in that area to hunt caribou because sometimes they wouldn't come through the Upper Tanana. As far as, it wouldn't affect the moose, and there was so few people, the people wasn't the problem. Where now, it's just there's too many people for the resource, you know. So the road affects it because all the game anywhere near the highway gets herded way harder. And I know, over like on the, long before the road in 1912-1915 Chisana-Nabesna area when they had the Chisana gold strike and the Nabesna mine, there was a lot of market hunters over there to supply meat for the mines, and the Natives lived over there at Cross Creek and Cooper Creek had a hard time because these market hunters were killing a lot of the game that they normally would have hunted. And game actually is... You know Alaska per square mile has game than any state in the union. It's just that we're so doggone big that we've got a lot. But yeah. So in that respect, particularly in certain areas, it affected it, but along the road other than maybe around where some of the permanent camps were, I don't think it was much of a problem. I'd say one of the biggest changes for the Natives though was education. They got introduced to it a lot more and a lot quicker, and it was hard for the older Natives to realize the importance of education. And even to this day I can see in the Native people, they're not, they don't push their kids like white people do as far as get to school, get good grades, go to college, you know, because it's just you know...They didn't do it- and they got along fine, so why, of course the Native way, they don't push their kids on anything, really. They didn't discipline like white people probably, now it's called abuse, a lot of it. But their way was more, I don't know what the word would be.

**STACEY CARKHUFF:** Passive.

**LAVELL WILSON:** Yeah, more passive. Oh, they'd discipline them, I remember Ellen Dimet, she used to crack the whip sometimes.