

2015-07-19

Lael Morgan talks about Howard Rock

April 7, 1980

SIDE A

Lael Morgan introduces herself and explained that she had just duplicated tapes which she had made over the years with Howard Rock and she wanted to make an introductory. She met Howard in 1965 when she was working for the Juneau Empire. She met Howard in Skagway. It was the only vacation she knew that he took before his retirement. The museum in Skagway was closed, but someone in the town said they would open it for her. She found Howard there. Howard had a sketch book with him and he was doing some sketches. In the process of looking at the museum she broke an artifact. She told Howard and he fixed the artifact. They ran into each other a couple of times in the ensuing days and she saw him in the Juneau airport. She had heard a little bit about the paper [Tundra times], but didn't know much about it. She wrote her first article for him the following year. She interviewed and wrote about the last Chilkoot blanket maker in Klukwan. In 1966 she came to Fairbanks looking for work. She thought she would work for Rock not knowing how little money the paper had. He couldn't afford to hire her so she went to work for the Fairbanks daily news miner. She sent him articles every so often especially those dealing with the legislature since she could see the bush block forming without a byline. She went to work for Jessen's weekly. In 1968 she got a job with the L.A. Times until 1971. She could see the land claims was moving right along and Howard needed a hand. She got a four month's leave of absence. Her salary was low. She knew it was going to be tough working for Howard Rock. She was worn out at the end of the year and the Times said she had to come back or she would be fired. When she returned to L.A. the Times would not hire her back. After the land act was passed she got an Alisha Patterson foundation grant to live in each village. The work was made into newsletters, they were sent out nationwide and also published in the Tundra Times. Her first stop was in Anaktuvuk Pass in February. Howard was worried about her winter clothing. She then went to Pt. Hope and lived with Howard's sister. They had just gone to the banquet and Howard had been nominated for Man of the year. She discovered that Howard's family didn't like him for various reasons. They had no idea how he had sacrificed his career in art for the land claims settlement work. They tolerated her and later Ruth became her friend. She said she probably would have done better in Pt. Hope if she had never mentioned Howard's name. His relatives wanted to know about Howard's wife. Morgan talked about returning from Galena. Ruby Tansy was giving her a hard time and Howard stepped in and defended her. They were two reserved people who became close.

In 1973 she returned to the L.A. Times. Howard became very sick at this time and went to Hawaii to die. Tom Richards, Jr. was running the paper at this time and Howard returned from Hawaii. John Sackett had the management of the paper and asked her to come up to Alaska to work for Howard for a few weeks which she did. Howard was very frail and was only working a couple of hours a day. The paper was well staffed and she wondered why she was asked to come back to work. She noticed that Howard always brightened when she was around and they began to spend more time together in the office and talking about the future. He started working full time again and began to get stronger. He pulled the paper from the red to the black in a year and a half. In the spring of 1974 Morgan said she was working for the Alaska Magazine and Howard wanted to go to the whaling festival in Pt. Hope. They traveled together. Howard had forgotten his Eskimo. They stayed with Ruth and Bernard. During that time they

finally came to understand what he had done for the village. She worked some for the Tundra times over the years. In 1976 Howard wrote her to tell her about a Ford Foundation grant he had to study bilingual education. They got the grant and she spent one month in Alaska and the other two outside. Howard knew he was dying. When she returned from St. Lawrence she was told that Howard was very sick. He insisted that she go to Barrow. She described what Howard looked like. He was working at the office and said he wanted to stay until the paper got out. He went into the hospital and she went up to Barrow. Howard wanted to change his will, but they could not get the lawyers there in time. Tom Richards, Jr. called her when Howard died. They had a memorial service for Howard in Fairbanks. Joe Ubrickson made it to the service. They had a funeral service for Howard in Pt. Hope. Morgan said Howard had told her that he wanted to be buried in Pt. Hope outside of the Episcopal cemetery.

Morgan said whenever they were broke at the Tundra times Howard didn't seem to be very worried. Something would happen that saved them. She didn't think it was unfitting to have Howard buried next to his great uncle Attungowruk.

Morgan said the other side of this tape was recorded with Tom Snapp and Howard Rock at the Tiki Cove in 1972 in Fairbanks. She wanted to get the history of the Tundra times and neither of them wanted to sit in the office for the interview. She said over the years she has tried to fill in the holes of Howard Rock's life. She talked about Rock's ex-wife. She was in White Mountain and met Howard's ex-father-in-law. Howard never talked about his marriage. His greatest love was the lady in Tangiers (Madelaine Faulcon). Howard wanted to write a book and promised an agent in New York, but they didn't like his writing or Morgan's rewriting. They didn't get around to writing. Howard died with 16,000 ahead for the paper. The other tapes were done 1974 when Howard was very weak. She is giving them to the library because she believed that more than any other person Howard Rock helped weld the Native groups together. When the land claims movement they did not believe it would be settled in their own time. She said Rock was wonderful to work for. He had a terrific news sense. He tempered both Morgan and Tom Snapp and was fair. He was objective and served as a referee in the middle of the fighting. She said she knows no other human that came such a terrific span from subsistence hunting to where he wrote in another language and managed a newspaper. To the very end he was an artist. Rock was asked to do a painting to be auctioned off to support the Tundra Times. One day Rock was flying from Fairbanks to Anchorage and saw Mt. McKinley (Denali) and it struck him that it was beautiful. It was not easy for him to give up his art for something else he loved. Morgan said there has been a void in his life since Rock has been gone. A couple of years ago Dorcas Rock had a son who was named after Howard.

Conversation on phone between Morgan and an unidentified person. He talked about traveling up north for a promotion. He said it could snow anytime in the park at 3-4,000 feet. He said you fly up to Carpathian for skiing in the summer and talked about contacts.

Another phone conversation. Morgan and an unidentified person talked about a possible lawsuit.

SIDE B

1972

Continuation of ORAL HISTORY 2015-07-17? Recorded at the Tiki Room in Fairbanks, Alaska

Howard Rock said he [Don Foote] began to worry about the village [Pt. Hope] if something went wrong if these devices were exploded. Foote became more and more disenchanted with his job and he became

outspoken and eventually fired. Morgan said his wife could sew mukluks as well as the Natives. Rock said she went right in and sewed with the women. Tom Snapp said Foote went out on the whale hunts and it was through Foote's writing about Pt. Hope he understood about the subsistence culture. Snapp talked about the in-depth study that Foote undertook about the value of subsistence in Pt. Hope. Rock and Snapp talked about Foote's automobile accident and death. Snapp talked about Mrs. Madigan.

[Break in recording]

[loud music in the background makes it difficult to understand the speakers] Tom Snapp talked about starting up the paper. He said he worked together with Howard Rock. Snapp talked about Rock's multicultural knowledge. Morgan said her favorite article that Howard wrote the first year was titled Don't sweat. Howard said that the people were so rugged because of the games they played. They had endurance. They could make quite a bit of exertion without really sweating. Morgan asked if they had to worry about bills at the beginning of the newspaper. Rock and Snapp said no. Rock said Dr. Forbes was furnishing the money. Snapp talked about the money that Jessen's charged for printing. Morgan asked Snapp to describe Howard's writing. Snapp said Howard had a natural knack for writing and had an appreciation for humanities. Howard was early to recognize the need to have bilingual education and to preserve the culture. Morgan said Howard was brought up the traditional way and was exposed to the outside. Snapp said he had an appreciation of both cultures. Howard said they can both work together and they are compatible. Snapp said he had a lot of things in his writing style that were different than his own style. Snapp said he used overstatement and Rock used understatement. Snapp said Rock had a lot of editorials that were more effective because of the understatement. Rock said he would go over Snapp's editorials and suggest doing it a little different way. Snapp said Rock would go over his editorials and try to tone them down and he would go over Rock's and try to tone them up. Morgan asked if they had any time to have a personal life. Snapp said when they first started they had to go all night long. Rock said they had to so they could meet their deadline. Snapp talked about the canary they had. Snapp stayed with the paper for one year. Snapp said when Dr. Forbes determined to back the paper then he decided to work for it. They discussed their first year's support money. Morgan asked if they were discriminated against because they were a Native paper. Snapp said they ran into all sorts of things. They had to make larger deposits. Snapp and Howard talked about the ways they were treated differently. Snedden wrote an editorial about pressing for reservations. Morgan said she was surprised with people's reactions against her since she was working for the newspaper. Snapp discusses land selections by the state up to the Minto boundary. Morgan asked if the Indian Affairs Association helped out. Snapp said not too much. They did get Ted Stevens to file the papers to protest the state land selections. [loud conversation in the background] Snapp said they bought maps and sent them out to the villages. Stevens drew the papers up to protest the land selections. Northway and Tanacross also had issues with land selections. In 1968 a freeze on land selection was implemented by Udall. Snapp said Nenana protested about land selections in 1962. Snapp said he got a lot of duff about this. Howard talked about threats at that time. Snapp said when the paper started the News-miner sent over word that they were given six weeks.