

2015-07-20

Lael Morgan

September 24, 1979

Lael Morgan said she was supposed to be working on another assignment but she has been thinking about the Howard Rock book. She decided she might forget things. A lot of what she knows is in her head and she wants to record this. She talked about tapes of Howard Rock interviews held in a bank. She also had some letters written by Howard Rock. She said the tapes explained Howard's marriage. She met Howard in the late fall of 1965. They met in Skagway while they were both on vacation. She left the Juneau Empire in 1966 and asked Howard Rock for a job at his newspaper. He couldn't pay her. She worked for the News-miner and did some free work for Howard Rock. In 1967 Sheila Turner came to work at the newspaper.

In 1971 it looked like the land claims were going to move. She took a leave of absence from the L.A. Times and worked for Howard. He had fired his regular staff person so he could hire her. After four months the L.A. Times told her to come back. She decided to stay and work for Howard. She commented on working for Howard. He edited her articles and he knew what the people would like to read in the Bush. In 1972 Morgan went up to live with Howard's family in Pt. Hope. She discovered that they hated Howard for various reasons. They didn't have any concept of what he had done. They finally understood what Howard had done. She returned from Galena one time and ran into Howard Rock and Ruby Tansy. Howard defended Morgan at the time. She said Howard didn't talk much and what he said was well thought out. She talked about she felt about Howard.

In 1973 she wanted to get out of Alaska and leave the Native cause. She returned to the L.A. Times. She was asked to return to Alaska to work for Howard who was sick at the time. She figured out that they had invited her up to cheer up Howard. In 1976 Howard asked her to study bilingual education and had a Ford Foundation grant for four months. She was asked to go to Barrow because Howard said it was good for the grant. She wrote a copyrighted story about the Japanese explorer who had dogsledded across the Arctic Circle. Lee Alder asked her to come in to see Howard because he was so sick. Howard had promised to go to the hospital after deadline day. She talked about Howard wanting to change his will and the end of his life. She talked about dealing with grief.

In 1975 Morgan took Howard back to Pt. Hope for the whale festival. He made his peace with his family. While they were in Pt. Hope he pointed out Attungowruk's grave which was far from the main cemetery and he asked to be buried there. She thought it would be in his will. When he died she told people that Howard wanted to be buried outside of the cemetery. It was difficult but the church was very reasonable about it. It took her time to realize that Howard had all the elements of a witch doctor. He had a kinship with Attungowruk who he admired. She thought he had a special magic.

Change to another recording. Lael Morgan is talking by phone to an unidentified person (search-and-rescue person?).

Lael Morgan comments about people who walk out and get lost or eaten by bears and asked if they had any cases to the point. The unidentified person said not about the bears. He said what he meant were

people that were left at the plane accident and had expired were eaten by bears. Morgan asked about someone trying to walk out. The person said there was one case where someone had an accident on Mt. Spurr. The pilot had landed in white-out conditions and they arrived at the site the next day or two. The pilot had decided to walk out and they never did find him. If he had stayed with the aircraft they would have found him within thirty-six hours. The snow conditions were bad. Morgan asked about a family who walked away from a plane crash and found a cabin they were familiar with. The person was not familiar with the case. He said there was an instance where two people took off in their planes and one guy was forced down because of a storm. He walked out thirty or forty miles in winter. They found his plane. The survivor was in good shape when he was found. He said the ones who carry emergency goods are the ones who survive. The ones that aren't prepared are the ones who don't survive.

The rest of the recording is a Russian language lesson.