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Howard Rock

Lael Morgan, interviewer

1974

Howard Rock described the Arab way of fixing beef. Morgan talked about his friend, Madelaine Faulcon, who he dated for about a year and a half. He talked about expecting a child with Madelaine. He was given notice about a month before his departure from Tunis. Madelaine and her family had a going away party for Howard. Madelaine wanted him to come back to Tunis. She wanted to establish a store and have Howard manage it. It never happened. Howard wonders what would have happened if he had gone back.

When he returned to the states he became acquainted with a girl who had lived in Alaska for many years. He married her and they divorced after just a year. He never remarried. He said he started doing the jewelry work again without any enjoyment. He never had any children.

Rock said he had a chance to go up to Point Hope in 1961 which he took. His friends from Bainbridge Island wanted to live in an Eskimo village. They decided to go up to Pt. Hope and wanted him to go along. They were artists with a business making Eskimo figurines out of porcelain. Allan Johnson was the name of the man. He went along with the Johnsons and brought art supplies for painting. He lived with his brother, Allan. The Johnsons lived there about a month. They got there in June before he did so they could see a whale hunt. Rock came up later. On the way up to Pt. Hope he was introduced to Ralph Purdue. Deek Brown introduced them. He was interested in their plans to do art work. Ralph Purdue told him that he would have him put on a show in Fairbanks. He returned to Fairbanks and prepared for an art show. One of his painting sold for 1,000 dollars and others sold well. He was staying with his niece in Fairbanks. He began seriously to think about painting more. They started talking about communications in villages and newspapers and newsletters along with Tom Snapp and LaVerne Madigan. She was interested in some kind of newspaper. Rock said he began to realize the problems and how they were affecting the people at Pt. Hope including his parents. When he arrived at Pt. Hope they said you came just in time to help us and he was mystified because he didn't know what was going on. He became aware of the Atomic Energy Commission's plan to detonate an atomic device to create a harbor at Pt. Thompson which is about thirty miles south of Pt. Hope. He was amazed about the problems they realized already. They knew about fallout, contamination of animals, and effect on reproduction. The women themselves were talking about this. Morgan commented that Pt. Hope was always a sophisticated village. Howard Rock said the folks there had never had education beyond fifth grade other than Tony Jewell who had become a preacher and teacher and was related to his own family. Reggie Jewell was Tony's grandson. Rock said Jewell was a very stern teacher. Rock's father taught himself how to read. He had a small dictionary that he carried with him all the time. When Rock returned in 1961 his parents were gone. His parents died in 1949 and 1950. He had visited Pt. Hope in 1948 and his parents were quite old. When he left his father told him that when Howard returned they might not be around. The next time he returned to the village his parents were gone. Morgan commented that there wasn't much educated leadership in the village. Rock said they were aware of this huge problem. They lived on seals, whales, walrus and caribou which would all be susceptible to nuclear contamination. Their main way of life even now is subsistence. The men are fine workers in

construction. They earn good money. They are working on the pipeline now. The people had learned to mix their two economies. They liked having freezers and electric stoves and beds which they have been buying. They still hunted the whale, walrus and fished. Dinner is always some kind of Native food. Once in a while they will have chicken and hamburgers.

Morgan asked them when he started getting involved with the newspaper. Rock said he thought he would continue to paint since the art showing was successful. In the meantime they started talking about some kind of communications media. He had mentioned this at a council meeting they had at Pt. Hope with Laverne Madigan. They were discussing the Cape Thompson issue and talking about writing to Secretary Udall. He was assigned to write to him about the concerns of the people at Point Hope. After he wrote the letter Madigan's organization started to help them. The Tundra times came out on October 1, 1962 for the first time. One of their subjects was Pt. Thompson. Rock said they called off the blast but it keeps coming up once in a while. Morgan said if they had a deep water port like they planned then there wouldn't be a need for the pipeline. Rock said he has thought of these things. He kept thinking about the animals and the possibility of nuclear contamination. Morgan asked him when he went up to Pt. Hope was he planning on returning to Seattle. Rock said he wasn't sure where he would go but he was thinking of art as a source of income. He thought there should be a newspaper for communication but he didn't think he would physically be involved with it. Through Madigan they tried to approach foundations for support but was unsuccessful. Later on Henry Forbes was concerned about the polar bear. He didn't like the way it was hunted by planes and wanted to do something about it. Tundra times concerned itself about this subject later on. He believes that they were instrumental in having this practice stopped. This was a ticklish subject because some of their men were getting paid through the polar bear hunts. He believed some of them were influenced by their white men friends. He was threatened because of this. Morgan said Forbes must have been concerned about people, too. Rock said he became very educated about the plight of the people. He consented to fund the founding of the Tundra times. He was from the Forbes family of Boston. They were traders with China and whale hunters. They discussed Forbes being related to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Rock said the money for the paper was a loan but Forbes didn't expect to get the money back. Forbes spent thousands of dollars keeping the money going to the paper. He died in August 1966. That following December was the end of his loan money. Since that time they had to take the paper on themselves. It was very worrisome to try to keep it going. They never knew where the money was coming from. They advertising helped. He got the idea of taking over the Eskimo Olympics program. They started making money with it. The profit funded the newspaper. The first Tundra times banquet was held in the basement of the Elks Club. The first banquet broke even, but they had a lot of fun. They also rented The Switzerland for a banquet. Stuart Udall was their speaker. They had 500 people attend. During the banquet Udall announced the land freeze in Alaska. Hickel attended the banquet and argued with Udall. Morgan said when Forbes died he left his stock in the paper to Rock. Rock said he made arrangements with his nephew, Wayne Emerson. Rock said there were 20,000 shares of stock. They had to tap into it during the bad times. Rock said now the paper is starting to make a little money.

Morgan asked him about the part that the Tundra times played. Rock said through the years it took him a while to realize that the Tundra times information has been valuable in the land claims effort. He said remarks by the Native leaders were recorded in the Tundra times and were established as utterances for mass media. These came to be respected by Senator Kennedy, Senator Jackson and other Congress members. They made an important contribution to the land claims. They directly quoted some of the

very fine remarks of their leadership. They had a very good effect on some of the important politicians who had something to do with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Morgan asked him when he realized that the paper had power. Rock said they had started to get some reactions from different areas. They started to publicize the Pribilof situation. They influenced E.L. Bartlett who introduced a bill which passed both houses and the situation was solved. The people had been living under the domination of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. He said after it began to be discussed Governor Egan established a commission to look into the Pribilof situation. He was one of the people on the commission along with Willard Borman and others.

Morgan asked about the time first meeting in Barrow and the concern about the Atomic Energy Commission's plans and if a Native could get information into a newspaper. Rock said Native situations and problems such as sanitation and housing was never publicized in the news media in Alaska. When they started publishing the Tundra times in 1962 they started publicizing these problems along with pictures. They exposed the problems of the Natives. These had an effect because Congress got ahold of information. Their effort had a direct result by the actions of the Congress of the United States. Morgan said they were scooping the other bigger newspapers. They did this for several years. After a while the media in the state began to notice they had quite a telling effect on people in Congress and they were doing something about Native problems. Other newspapers in the state began to pick up on Native problems and although reluctantly at first. Morgan said she remembers the first editorial. Rock said he wrote the first editorial. Morgan asked what made him so middle ground. Rock said one of the things he realized was they were handling a delicate situation which was new to the Native people. It was huge and complex. He didn't want to rock the boat too much. He didn't want to say something too strongly on a subject. His policy was to be fair. They were listened to instead of being shot at. Morgan said if it hadn't been for the schools like White Mountain then the people wouldn't have gotten together. Rick said at the Barrow meeting the leadership began to realize that they had similar problems. This had a very unifying effect on the job that was beginning to be undertaken. Soon after the Barrow meeting the Tanana Chiefs Conference formed in 1962. He said there was an Indian from Kalskag that attended the meeting. Along with the help of LaVerne Madigan and the Association the Native leadership they started to settle the land claims. The Association funded several of the meetings. Rock said the Association had heard about the problem at Pt. Hope and went on a fact finding trip. Rock said he wrote the letter to the Secretary of the Interior with the help of the Pt. Hope people. Rock said they talked about the possible contamination of the animals and marine animals in the letter. The plan was to explode the nuclear device right on the beach. Morgan asked about the contents of the letter. Rock said it was a request to help the villagers. The letter that was written was a leg to stand on for the Association. They needed something like that to effectively assist their efforts to stop the Atomic Energy Commission. Morgan said that set the ball rolling for the state to tackle their own problems. Rock said after they started their paper they kept after the Atomic Energy Commission because they kept hearing about revival of the Cape Thompson project. Later it was decided by the Atomic Energy Commission to postpone the project. Morgan said the first paper mentioned land claims. Rock said at the first meeting at Pt. Barrow land was mentioned very prominently. Morgan asked if that was a number one goal for him. Rock said they hadn't started the paper yet, but it was an important subject. At that meeting they said at that meeting that Barrow was sitting on a resource that they could use and that was natural gas. The only people using it at that time were the government installations, but not the Eskimos.