

## Transcript Summary

<b>UAF Oral History Call No:</b>	2016-15-02
<b>Date of Recording:</b>	1955
<b>Length of Recording:</b>	00:13:20
<b>Original Media:</b>	Dictabelts (red)
<b>Digitized By:</b>	Northeast Document Conservation Centre using IRENE method
<b>Digitization Date:</b>	March 2021
<b>Narrator:</b>	Clyde 'Slim' Williams
<b>Interviewer:</b>	It would appear that Richard 'Dick' Morenus gave Slim Williams the Dictabelt recorder and Slim is just telling stories into the machine by himself. Dick is not on the recording at all.
<b>Others Present:</b>	N/A
<b>Recording Location:</b>	Chicago, Illinois
<b>Transcriber:</b>	Leslie McCartney
<b>Transcription Date:</b>	December 12, 2024
<b>Access:</b>	The dictabelts were donated to us by the great-nephew of Dick Morenus who inherited them from his mother (Dick's niece). Slim and his wife never had children so there is no next of kin. We have a signed Letter of Transmittal on file from Dick's great-nephew. For public/electronic use.
<b>Where to Find this in Text:</b>	These recordings were made by Clyde 'Slim' Williams so that Richard 'Dick' Morenus could write Slim's story in book form. It was published as <i>Alaska Sourdough, the Story of Slim Williams</i> by Richard Morenus (1956). New York: Rand McNally & Company. The book is available on Internet Archive <a href="https://archive.org/details/alaskasourdoughs0000rich/mode/2up">https://archive.org/details/alaskasourdoughs0000rich/mode/2up</a> or in the Elmer E. Ramuson Library, F909.M75 Alaska Collection. Where possible, the pages of where some of the transcribed stories appear in the book are noted.

(00:00:00)

I thought white water won't amount much to me and I just had to [inaudible]. But I got my boat all fixed, and we got about 30 pound of jade. I would put my boat in and run about oh, a half hour, and of course my dogs are runnin' down the shore. And I'd stopped and beached my boat and get out and wait for my dogs to catch up, let 'em rest a little and get in the boat and going again. And boy, I was just doing fine

that's all there was to it. And dogs keepin' up well and everything just went like a song. But the third day, it happened, I run into a rock. Oh it was a [inaudible], and it just wrecked me, boat and everything else, dumped everything out in, ah, river. I managed to get ashore in the fast water, but I was wet as a rat and everything I had on me was wet and that's all I owned, just what I had on my back. I did happen to have a fish hook in my pocket, rolled on up onto a stick which I carried nearly all the time after I got [inaudible].

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Well my boat was gone, my jade was gone, my million was gone, everything was, ah, just wrecked that's all there was to it. But I wasn't discouraged I knew where there was a lot more and but I had to eat of course and the dogs got up with me and I started on down river after I took my clothes off and wrung them out a little then I got [inaudible]. That evening I camped and didn't worry much, I had that million back there and I knew where it was, there was nothin' to it, I could go get it [inaudible] but I had to have a little grub first. And my dogs seemed to be tickled too because they didn't have to run so fast after the boat and the next day about, oh, sun was up nice and I run into that rabbit skin robe. I'd had it wrapped up in the canvas, rolled up like I always did, it had floated right along a long ways and got tangled in a tree. So I went and dug the little rabbit skin robe out. Boy, seein' that kinda like meetin' an old friend. But, with those fish hooks I had all the fish I wanted and I could feed the dogs.

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But by the time I got back to Nome again I was sure ready for a good feed of hotcakes and syrup it sure did go good I'm tellin' ya. Somehow when you're out living like that, you want sugar so bad, I don't know what it is. But everybody is that way. Well, here I was back in Nome again and knew where the million was, I had enough money for my immediate needs, wasn't worryin' much. Muggin' around town and I run square into Corks, and boy, did he have an idea. He knew right square where there was a million and all we had to just go get it. And he limped a little on his leg, not much, he swore he didn't but assumin' [inaudible] but he had found a boat, a homemade affair, it was big and it was about eighteen feet and about thirty-five long and boy, we was gonna get that boat, we could get it for a song and a fella gonna sign a song himself. And we was gonna load that with trade goods and we was goin' to Siberia. Now you can see Siberia [inaudible] [delay as machined must have been turned off then turned on again].

00:03:12

[inaudible] [Slim is now too close to the microphone and the audio is hard to make out at first] ... and cowntowed and we couldn't figure out what they was talkin' about but after they left we decided they liked us and we and didn't like who was on that darned boat. And the next day here they come with some meat, it's some meat and some fish, and a lotta junk that we didn't want, but they thought we was hungry I think but how I know that they liked us from experience of later years. Now they don't give ya a woman unless they like ya. And if they give ya a woman they expect you to marry her and stay there, even if a girl comes to you, it comin' from the idea of marriage, not just as a flirtation. Well, there was a little fella in this bunch, he was very skinny and one leg was shorter than the other, he limped a lot. And he didn't seem to have anything and that's what we finally figured out. He was always happy, and Corks took a big likin' to him. Well I did too as far that's concerned. But he was so happy all the time and we give him something, of course excepting trade back, but he'd give it to somebody else or give it back to us, he just didn't take it that was all. And, Corks got to feelin' sorry for him, he didn't give that little fella something, he'd make him take it. So I believe he's broke. Didn't have any furs or anything like to trade. So next time he was up there, he give him a couple of plugs of tobacco, some tea, and a little sugar, and give him a little bit of rice, they liked rice. Well the next day he come back with a little girl, oh, she was 12, 14 maybe, I don't know how old she was, poor little thing. But just him and her come and he

wanted to give her to Corks. Well, Corks never did seem to care much for women he seemed to always be shy about 'em. Well this little fella he pushed the gal over towards Corks and Corks push her back and the girl she stood there smilin' all the time and it was really a interesting thing.

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And finally, Corks he just got disgusted and scared all together and took for the cabin, went inside. Well he was pretty safe there because they just didn't come into your cabin unless just you insisted on it. We had 'em in and they admired very much but they'd never come in unless you just motion and coax 'em in. So he knew that the was pretty well off. Well then it's up to me to do somethin' about that gal, I knew he didn't want her and I didn't want her either and so, I motioned, powwowed but the little fella was awful solemn he just wasn't, he seemed to be worried or somethin' I don't know what. But finally I got 'em to take the girl away. Next time he come back he brought all of that stuff with him, the tobacco, with some of it a little off of it, and he opened one of the packages of tea, and I imagined used some of the sugar but here he was wantin' to give us back. Well, it is up to me to just make him take it. Corks wouldn't do no more, he just let him on. So, but I insisted and finally got him to take it away again. So from that on, he was just all right, friendliest thing in the world but he'd, we'd never take anything more when we'd give it to him he'd give it away, he hadn't be able to pay for it seemed.

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Well anyhow, we went there and didn't know what we was gonna do, that's all there was to it, we couldn't go back home in that little dingy so we went down to the camp one day and there was about 15 men and I'd say 15-20 women, I never did get a count on 'em because they was just pretty shy, did look out their door and that's it, that's about all there was to it. But we spotted they had 4 or 5 boats, and one of them big ones, like the whole family usin' them, Lord they're 30' long, and they're big, heavy, well we knew we didn't want one of them but they one about half the size, I'd say 15 foot long and 4-5 feet deep, and so we motioned and they couldn't talk and finally we made a swap with them. We give 'em our dinghy and the .22 rifle and a couple of pounds of tea that we was ... for their canvas, for their hide boat.

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They make their boat out of timber they'd pick up, and they split it and hew it down and they used some whale ribs and this one was about half whale ribs and, or whale ... what comes out of their mouth, out of a whales' mouth, and this one was a good one, not too heavy and we got it in the water and got it back to camp. Tickled to death of course. And the next day or two we gots about a 100 pound of rocks in the bottom of that skin boat, and we had it rigged up with oars, and found some timber we could hew out oars with so we had two set of oars, we had a sail fastened on it, and so we could use it a little, and started back home. Well, we made it. When the night come I had to just sit and wait because we had no compass, couldn't tell where we was goin'. But we landed back really quicker than we went over in the old tub with the engine because our engine was workin' all the time I'm telling ya that. We was in a hurry to get back. Boy, we was lucky that a storm didn't catch us because we'd a just been blowed up [inaudible] that's all there is to it.

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'Cuz we just couldn't done anything but, ignorance is bliss you know. That's the way things go in these world. Well to curl up in my little old rabbit skin robe on in my side of the world, boy it really felt good, but I wasn't worryin' much anyhow, I already had that million made, I knew where that jade was. Course I told old Corks all about and he was feeling good about it too. But we was broke, we didn't have any money at all, we just broke, that's all there was to it. Cleaned out altogether. So we had to go to work.

Well, I'm not ... couldn't hold a job very good them days for some reason. You know I was so good at everything I started at, after I'd worked a couple of weeks if they didn't make me foreman while I'd quit but I held down a job long enough to make a little money and find out a lot I'll tell ya that.

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Someone had went and got some jade and brought it out. And several chunks of it layin' around in different places, had it for hold their doors open with it and layin' on the bar and everyplace else. I then found out that jade was no good. If the jade was alright, if you knew jade, but anybody went up there they just have to go up and they have to know jade because they, we'd learned from fellas there that new jade ... there was jewel jade and there was jade and there was jade and most of this this wasn't any good at all and you just look at that you might have a piece that weighed 100 pound and maybe in that hundred pound why you'd have a piece as big as a marble and it'd be good and it just a, of course when you gotta a good piece it's worth fabulous money that was right. But, just goin' to get a load of it and bring it back why that just nuts that's all there was to it. So there was my million gone, me broke and having to work. Well, by fall I was hooked up [11:08-11:12 recording breaks up and he repeats himself when recording starts again] ... well just of course when you gotta good piece, it's worth fabulous money that was right but to just goin' and getting' a load of it and bring it back, well, that was just nuts, that's all there was to it. So there was my million gone, me broke and havin' to work. Well by fall, I was hooked up enough so I could get by again and really just started some other crazy thing that I didn't know anything about [11:37-11:44 silent] and I wasn't much interested in gold for some reason I don't know.

00:11:49

The Eskimos was what interested me. They're the most hospitable people on earth. You come into one of their camps or igloos or sod houses in wintertime, or you used to not now of course, but early days come into their sod houses or anything they would immediately come out and take care of your dog team for you, feed it, put it away, you come in into their camp with a whole sled load of trade goods, leave it plumb open 'cuz they just didn't steal that's all there was to it. They'd, in fact they would go out on beach and find driftwood, now driftwood is something that that think an awful lot of. They always looking for it. But they'd find a piece of driftwood, they'd lay a little stick up on it or rock or something and nobody else would take it, that was theirs. They would mark somebody else had found it and they just didn't take it that's all there was to it. It wasn't done. And to lie, they just didn't seem to know how it lie. Well in reality they didn't have anything to lie for or about. If they would go out hunting and come back and say they got a walrus, why the next day they'd find out they didn't anyhow or the same with anything else, it was right there in that one little village, and they just didn't lie. Well it's [end of recording].