

## Transcript Summary

<b>UAF Oral History Call No:</b>	2016-15-05
<b>Date of Recording:</b>	1955
<b>Length of Recording:</b>	00:13:43
<b>Original Media:</b>	Dictabelts (red)
<b>Digitized By:</b>	Northeast Document Conservation Centre using IRENE method
<b>Digitization Date:</b>	December 2024
<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 12-13, 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)

Slim Williams: [starts mid-sentence, he must have started talking before it was actually recording] up empty. Though we made a camp and we was a wonderin' whether we would have to make a cache and leave it until the snow comin' and go on, but so we decided we'd go up and look see. Well just about camp the river turned way over to the bank and was probably three miles around that bend and right

straight across was just about a mile. Well, my partner was a good woodsman, he was fine in every way but he lacked his eyes somehow, I don't know what it was, he see well but if anything was standin' he was kinda like an animal that way. If anything was standin' still, he didn't seem to notice it. If it would move then he'd see it fine but he wasn't much of a track man either, he didn't understand tracks very well so when we come to this bend he said I'll go around the river and see how it looks and he said you go across and see how the track looks. Well that was fine, I knew I had to go about one mile to his three so I just didn't hurry, I was foolin' along lookin' at tracks and everything on the river and the barb between all of where that big circle was pretty much flat, it had a little ravine through it, willows growin' a quite a few, so some places you could only see fifty feet and some you can see two or three hundred yards. Well, I was goin' along not thinkin' much of anything and something warned me, I don't know what it was, but I looked around and here come a bear, he weighted about a thousand pounds and he was just coming like a freight train right square at me.

00:01:45

Well, I'd used a 30 30 Carbine up 'till that time and my partner was using a 06 and getting me quite a bit of bother and he said some day a bear will eat you up but I said no, if you put your lead in the right place any gun is big enough and we used to kid, and quarrel in a jolly way over our guns as everybody does and when that bear started at me, now I was just as calm as I could be, I never get scared until somethin' happens and it's all over well then you can ... but I shot well, not a lot of men that done any better, and I just throwed my rifle up and pulled the trigger and nothin' happened. Again, and again, and again I shot four times just as a fast as I could and that bear comin' square at me. Well by that time, that bear had his mouth open and he was awfully close. And I said to myself, boy, them, somethin' must have happened so I just dropped to one knee right quick and told a dead beat on his chest and pulled the trigger and I see the hair bulge at his shoulder. I knew I had been puttin' my lead in the right place. But still that bear was comin'. Well, I just jumped kinda to one side and the bear passed me and slid to stop about sixty feet from me deader than a mackerel you know. Well boy, I went over and sit down on 'em and I was, my legs where shaking, just won't hold me up. I figured oh boy, you just better get you a better rival that's all there is to it, this wasn't big enough. And sittin' there smokin' my cigarette and my partner come around. Well, he says, you just had a close line of lead gonna out of that piece you would a didn't ya? But he says I see you got 'em but he says I'm glad you did. Says you know I was walkin' along over there and he said that bear was layin' asleep he says, I walked right up within two feet of 'im and he jumped up, just scared me so bad I couldn't even shoot. And he says, he turned comin' straight towards you I figured he'd getcha, you'd get 'em, while the bear was runnin' from him mind ya and to me at all. But I got 'em and [dead air to 00:04:06]

00:04:06

Well we had to pack some stuff. Well you know the funny thing they say a pup is, don't know what he's doin' well, we cooked some of that bear meat and fed some to the pup, he just a little fella about four months old, made a good leader afterwards. But, we kept feedin' him this meat and feedin' him the meat and he ate too much and finally he took some over and cached it. Dug a hole and buried it. My partner and I wondered if that pup will ever knowed what he cached that. Ah, I don't think so I said. We went on, got to build a cabin, we'd about three weeks and we had to come back and get some more provisions. Hadn't snowed yet. But ice was on the river, froze up quite a bit. The pup come along with us. Well sir we gotta about a hundred yards of that cache and that pup just streaked out and went straight toward where that meat was dug it up. My partner said that little devil been thinkin' that ever since we started. Well maybe he was I dunno. But we got a pretty good cabin started and made and fixed up, don't take long. Know what cha do, you just get trees are close and cut 'em down, pile 'em up, use dirt floor, dirt roof, split the boards to put on your roof and throw some moss on it and throw some

dirt on it, you got a pretty good cabin in about a week. But we got our cabin fixed up and somebody had told us about a hot spring up in them Wrangell Mountains. We didn't know about the Wrangell, volcano. And, live at that. So we started out one day to find that hot spring and boy we was gone about a week, just cold, we'd go up the mountain, kill a sheep and drag it down to the brush and cook it.

00:06:07

When I got in I was just about dead, but you know that partner, he was wasn't wore out totally, just get along fine. Well, early that winter we was up the mountains trappin' and I was on a glacier and slipped and fell and lost my gun in a crevasse. Well, I had to go back and get a gun. So I went down the tradin' post and the fella there, an honest man as ever you seen in your life, he had Mauser and he said Slim he says I got this Mauser and he says it's as swell as you can got. I gotta half a dozen boxes of cabbage which I'll sell dirt cheap. Well, he was so truthful he told me about trying it out before he bought it and he bought it because a man was broke, and I said I guess that's alright. So I took the rifle, went back up in the mountains, and moose jumped up. Well he was feeding on a snowbank, oh a couple of hundred yards below me and I pulled a bead on 'em and I hit 'em. I shot again and I missed 'em and from that on those shells just bounced all over. Didn't get anything. Well, I knew the gun was just wore out but finally the moose did drop dead and ... so I cleaned 'em up and started back to camp and I run into a silver fox. Boy he was beauty and a silver fox worth money them days anyways from a \$100 to \$600-\$700. Pulled a bead on that fox and he wasn't over 60 feet from me, and I didn't shoot within five feet of 'em. Well I was pretty sore. So, I went back, I couldn't imagine the old fella cheating me on the gun, had to go back and get another gun of course. So I went twenty-five miles below there to Copper Center, old friend by the name of McCrea run a place and yes, he had a gun and so he says, you know I had more fun this summer with Jim, he said we was up in the mountains and he said a fella come along over the trail and he said he had a Mauser and he said he wanted to sell it and Jim of course he wanted to try it out first and he says he shot at a mark on a rock, he says a piece of moss about a hundred yards up and he says I run up to look at the moss and he said I couldn't see where he hit but he said I pointed right the center of the moss. He says I got back behind the rock and he shot again and he says don't believe he even hit the rock but he says I come out again and I pointed right at the center of the moss, when down behind the rock another shot, I come right, pointed right square at the moss. Well he said, Jim throwed back shoulder just as proud a peacock, he says I'll take the gun but come to find out that's the gun that Jim had sold me. So I got the really dirty end of it. [dead air at 00:09:02 until 00:09:06]

00:09:06

(Very faint to start out with then gets louder) We went over there trappin' and had a pretty good catch, we wasn't doing too bad at all. And I come in one night and there was a little partridge, sittin' out in the front of the cabin and the cabin was burnt down. Just a mess of coals that's all it was to it, everything had burned, our fur, we had two sheep hangin' up in the ... all the grub we had, everything we had. And ah, well, we had to go get our traps sprung, so we did, and started packing to Valdez [inaudible] dogs so we boarded, so we started back to Valdez. Well, we got to what they call Ptarmigan Drop and it was a gal there that was prospector, she had two prospecting buyers with her, somebody goin' to buy her mine. And it was thirteen miles over the summit. Well the summit didn't look to good to me, it hadn't been anybody over for quite a while and it was a tough one and when it was tough, it was just plenty tough. She had a horse and these two men, some men was middle aged men I would imagine, she wasn't too young, so we come through, I and my partner, swingin' along on our snowshoes you know and stop to get somethin' to eat. She said I wanna go with you. Why, I said Mrs. Johnson, you can't go, I said not with that horse. I said it won't do well she was gonna go anyhow, she got out and started to hook up that horse. Well you couldn't do anything with her dog. And ah, he was kinda an odd sort anyhow. Course these fellas they didn't know what she's up against. Well, anyhow, she just started out

by her and this horse. All we could do was just kinda take care of it the best we could. Well, we got Dutch Flats, that is six, seven miles and it was just nothin' to it the horse couldn't go any farther and she was wiggled out and so was the two men and we just was stuck, that's all there was to it, couldn't go back, horse too tired and they was too. So we just dug a hole in the snow and put 'em in it.

00:11:19

And put their blankets in there and wrapped 'em up and stuffed the hole up behind 'em. We unhooked the horse and tied him to the double ender and put the [shaves? sheaves?] up so we could find 'em when we come back and we it out across the mountain. Well, we made it, it was stormin' pretty hard. So we would get as far apart as we could and one would watch the other one. Well, my partner was ahead while I'd watch him and keep from turning you know a person will go in a circle if they ain't careful. Well if we would get out of line where we thought while we'd holler and we'd turn back and that way we kept straight line and or as near as we knew about the trail and as near as we could keep on it and we made it over alright. And of course told the folks on the other side what we'd done. Well they was in there all that night and until late the next evening before a rescue party got over and got 'em out. But they was alright, nothin' ever happened to 'em. They, people can stay in a snowdrift like that when they go a little bedding. They can do a pretty nice job of it. [00:12:26 dead air until 00:12:36]

00:12:36

By this time mail was comin' through with what they call a double ender. It is just a two ended sled about three feet wide and about seven feet long and it had [shaves? sheaves?] and you could hook those [shaves? sheaves?] on either end and go on right away. Well mail was comin' through on them them days and the mail come through with somethin' like \$75,000 if I remember right in gold and got up on that summit and got stuck. Well, they just unhooked from their sleds and brought their horses on and left that gold up there and it was up there for three or four days, it is plumb safe, nobody's gonna get it, you could depend on that. But that mail was quite a thing you know, when we first started takin' in from Valdez to Fairbanks we took it with dogs then in the fall of the year that is between the snow and the thaw, and they took it on men, man would have a contract to take [end of recording].