

Transcript Summary

UAF Oral History Call No:	2016-15-11_T02
Date of Recording:	1955
Length of Recording:	00:04:54
Original Media:	Dictabelts (red)
Digitized By:	Northeast Document Conservation Centre using IRENE method
Digitization Date:	December 17, 2024
Narrator:	Clyde 'Slim' Williams
Interviewer:	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.
Others Present:	N/A
Recording Location:	Chicago, Illinois
Transcriber:	Leslie McCartney
Transcription Date:	December 18, 2024
Access:	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.
Where to Find this in Text:	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 https://archive.org/details/alaskasourdoughs0000rich/mode/2up 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: [begins mid-sentence] here. That is between the snow and thaw and they took it on me and they ... man have a contract to take the mail in and ten or twelve men maybe fifteen wanted to go to Fairbanks well he load 'em up on mail, forty pound apiece, and he'd pay their expenses to Fairbanks. Sloggin' over that trail, boy it was something. Then he'd pick up some, well they'd wanna be get out in

Fairbanks and they'd slog back over the trail. That was before the boats run on the Yukon and before the mails got to runnin' between winter and summer. That was the tough time with the mail is when they was between the winter and summer. Of course, later on, why the mail gotta goin' from Fairbanks to ... or from Valdez to Fairbanks with bobsleds. That was a quite a thing. It was just the same as you're old rockaway sleds, rockaway coaches, only they built on bobsleds and they had four horses. I worked on all of 'em and drove all kind of their outfits.

00:01:12

But to just make a steady diet of it I just ... there was too much ... beautiful wild country there for me to see to stay on one job too long. I'd stay along enough to make a little grub stake then I'd go trappin' or prospectin' or somethin' I just never could see enough of it for some reason. Service says doin' things just for the doin'. Lettin' babblers tell the story. Growin' bigger and biggest of the whole. [dead air from 00:01:40 to 00:01:45]

00:01:43

Well I think about the most unique thing I ever witnessed was they had ferries across a lot of those rivers before they got bridges and I was I on the Tazlina River or down below the ferry and they was a little Indian boy used to come around quite a bit. One day he come tearing down to my camp, his eyes was bugged out and he was scared to death. And he said I see devil. I said whata mean Gene you seen devil? Oh, sure, devil he come. Why, I said whata mean devil him come? I said there ain't no devil Gene. Oh yes, I seen 'em he says black white man. Well, he'd seen a colored man and it was first one that he'd ever seen and he just couldn't figure out there that was the fella was blacker than night and yet he talked like a white man and he just couldn't quite figure it out. The first he figured out he was a devil and then he figured out that he must be a black white man. He just didn't know there was a such a thing as black white man and he wasn't black he was just a chocolate brown, in the gene line, but the colored fella he was really black. And he gotta be quite a fella up there too, he was a cook and boy he was good one and he got to be in great demand.

00:03:03

Of course he would pull some funny boners but he was a real cook and he was got to be known all over the country and so many of 'em called him the black white man and he just gotta kick out of that too because it was somethin' unusual to have a colored man up there. There's quite a few up there now. When you find 'em around most all the towns. We used to think of the colored man can only take the south but you find him in clear way north, he's doing fine I'm tellin' ya. [dead air from 00:03:35 to 00:03:42]

00:03:42

There wasn't just a awful lot of people, lot of men lost their minds those days in the north, I dunno why it was. But they say more men lost their mind there according to the population than anyplace in the world. It would be loneliness, disappointment, I don't know what it was. But it seemed like just all the time there was somebody loosin' their mind. And they used to bring 'em out from Fairbanks to Valdez with these double enders and there was these bobsleds and so there was a word come ahead to a roadhouse they used to call Our Home and there was just a kid there. The family had gone and the boys on the mail knew that they wanted a job, they [inaudible] so of a kid so the fella that come ahead of me said the next stage load would be crazy ones. He said look out and be careful for 'em. So, they drove in, everybody on the sled was plumb sane but they all hip that they gonna job this kid. So, they come in and just [end of recording].