

Transcript Summary

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| UAF Oral History Call No: | 2016-15-18 |
| Date of Recording: | 1955 |
| Length of Recording: | 00:09:16 |
| Original Media: | Dictabelts (red) |
| Digitized By: | Northeast Document Conservation Centre using IRENE method |
| Digitization Date: | December 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: | February 2, 2025 |
| 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: [Slim starts mid-sentence] go on and away they went. You know they have really no leader. They're the only animal I know of that has no leader. For instance, when you're out in the barren country and you can't get no ... 'cuz they got good eyesight and they smell well too. But when you're out in the barren country, or high in the mountains where ... and you see you can't any closer to a caribou

or maybe 25 or 30 and want one, why, just take a high shot and turn your gun loose and the bullet will hit over there someplace, I dunno where, but they'll hear that bullet and one of 'em will start to run, maybe from ya, you can't tell. Maybe run 100 yards and they'll stop and some other one will take a notion to lead and he'll tire out. Maybe straight towards ya, and they'll finally fool around and they're liable to get close enough that you can get a shot. I've pulled that a quite a few times. They're really a might queer animal. Of course, the wolves feed off of 'em quite a bit and you've heard of wolves that chasin' anything. Well I never really see that but once, then I see the tracks of course.

00:01:11

I was in the Wrangell Mountains and I see where a caribou had went down into the timber and it was runnin' and a wolf after it ... a wolf track after it. Well I crossed that and went a little ways further, couple of miles maybe, and caribou come back out of the woods, it went down into snow country, he'd come back into the open country again above timber and it was runnin' and the wolf after it. Well, the track was so darn fresh that I said, well, I just a little a fun I always liked to do somethin' just for the fun of it, and my dogs wanted to go, they's feelin' good. So, I just turned them loose never paid no attention to 'em. Well we run that thing for about 12 miles. It was awful interesting. The caribou would run maybe around the mountain, one wolf would be chasin' it. And you'd see another wolf cut across his tracks and pretty soon this other wolf would stop runnin', the other wolf would pick 'em up and chase 'em. And that way they just wore the tar outta 'em when I caught up to 'em, I didn't see the wolves, of course they heard me comin' and go otta there. But they'd been eatin' on 'em. They'd caught 'em and been eatin' on 'em.

00:02:23

The first thing the wolf will eat will be the liver. I don't know why that is. But they'll just tear the ... tear it open and eat the liver, the first thing. And they just eat the liver and not much more when I got there. I imagine they was a couple of young wolves that just wanted to chase for fun I dunno what else. As a rule a wolf will wait on a trail and ... the caribou's not afraid of the wolf. I dunno why. But I seen wolves settin' howlin' within 30 feet of a caribou and they paid no attention to 'em. But I've seen other places where the wolf was layin' in wait on a trail, caribou would come along and just about 4 jumps and he'd have that caribou. He'd caught 'em by the hind leg of that hamstring and that 200 pound animal knows ... and those jaws that they've got it don't take 'em long to cut the hamstring. But the wolf goes down of course and they he cuts his throat. But I've seen caribou not dead yet been so close to 'em when the wolves have got 'em. They will kill a wolf ... er caribou, and then howl ... there's a funny thing about the wolverine. You had a little trouble with them I guess. You know a wolf will kill a wolverine, now the wolf will weigh 200 pound, the wolverine maybe 50. But I watched one one time walk into where some wolves were eatin' on a caribou and the wolverine walked in and wolves left. They just gotta away from 'em. He was stinkin' devil you know and he'll eat all he want and then he'd dirty up the rest of it so nothin' come back but ... and he's got no home either. He's the only animal I know of that hasn't got a range.

00:04:22

Now a wolf will range the country and be back pretty much over his own tracks a week or ten days, so will a lynx, a fox would come every 2-3 days but a wolverine he's liable to come into your country today, raise Cain in your traps and he'll go right straight on through and a week from that time he'll be 100 miles away. He's just ... seems to have no range at all, he's a funny sorta of a dude. You know science tells us that the wolverine if you could cross a mink with a bear, you'd have a wolverine. He's kinda of a freak animal I think. Not hard to catch if you ... quite a few of 'em around and I one comes of course they're awful careful about gettin' in a trap, very keen about the scent. The way I used to do 'em, I'd cut

a tree down, 'bout 4-5 inches through and get the ... cut it about 3 foot from the ground and then I'd put the tree up on the ground and run it about 4 foot over the stump so it took out and it'd be 3 or 4 feet from the ground then I'd trim all the leaves back, limbs back as far as I could and I'd nail a caribou head or somethin' on the end of that log and set a trap back just about 2 foot from ... or 2 foot and a half from the end of the ...

00:05:53

Well, he'd come down, he'd see that head and he'd want it of course and the only way he could get it would be to walk out that log. Well, he'd walk out the log and he'd see the trap and be sittin' right wide open you know, anybody could see it, and he'd smell it. I'd let it be well scented out. He'd smell it and well, that was alright, he'd just step over it and get that caribou head. Well he'd carefully step over the trap with his feet and get to the caribou head and then he'd get to wrestling around with the caribou head tryin' to get it off with his hind foot in a trap and I'd have the trap stapled on the stump and so he'd have his foot in the trap and he couldn't reach the ground and so I just had 'em kinda hung and that's why I used to have several traps along my trap line set for a wolverine so they wouldn't get and raise Cain with the rest of my outfit. [dead air from 00:06:43 to 00:06:46]

00:06:46

One time I had a ... was on a stampede. We bought some dogs in Valdez and goin' to this stampede and we figured when we got into Fairbanks we could sell 'em, and was goin' to the Iditarod. And, so when we got in there we managed to sell one dog, that's about all we got a load of fresh freight in and we told this fella White Wings. He was of ... just a pleasant sort of a guy, blonde curly hair and a big gold tooth in front and always had a grin on his face and he just looked soft. He didn't look like a he man at all. He just looked like a sissy really and we used to call him White Wings because when he got in a fight, and he loved to get in a fight, boy he was just a whirlwind that's all there was to it, he was a devil on wheels. And he was along with me. Well there's a fella in front of us, we didn't know what he was of course, but we could see where he's fightin' these dogs and White Wings like his dogs a lot. And this fella was a fightin' these dogs, fightin' these dogs you could just see all the time where he kinda place where you ... so finally White Wings said to me he said Slim, when we catch that devil, he said if he's a big man you gotta lick 'em, he says if he's a little man I'm gonna lick 'em just 'cuz he's lickin' them dogs. Well we caught up with him, a little Frenchman, just about White Wings size. About 130 pound I'd say and ... he just drove up to him, he's gonna lickin' these dogs that time, he had about twice as much load as he should and White Wings just stopped his dogs and tipped his sled over and when up to this little fella. He said well, get ready, I'm goin' lick ya and the Frenchman was plumb game and by golly they pulled off their coats and started to fightin' just me there to watch 'em you know.

00:08:35

And boy that was a prettiest fight I ever see, they would just ... fought for a long time and I just wondered if lookin' for a while like White Wings was gonna get clean but then the Frenchman would be gettin' the best of it but finally White Wings cleaned 'em and ... and now he says you get ahold of that G pole and pull or he says I'm gonna do it again. So, he started him out pullin' on his gear open and lessen on his dogs a little bit. But they got us downtown and I just thought I'd just run this off and get [inaudible] anything I thought of and sent it along ... gonna hear from ya and whatha doin' [end of recording]