

## Transcript Summary

<b>UAF Oral History Call No:</b>	2016-15-25
<b>Date of Recording:</b>	1955
<b>Length of Recording:</b>	00:13:47
<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>	February 7, 2025
<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: [Slim starts mid-sentence] ... shaky and stiff I was in a fix I'm tellin' ya I was played get up I was afraid to do anything. And, I looked over and I see my dogs, I says that's it so I spoke to my leader and I said come here fella. And he come just tearin' right to me you know and around this hole of course that I'd broke out and then I got him to me and he licked my face and I said mush on and started him

across the river and the rest of my dogs come by me and got my sled to me and then I got hold of the handle bars and got on my seat ... on my feet but boy I was scared. Well I went on to the other side which was no better a bit than the one I'd been comin' on but I thought it was goin' to be so it was alright. But while I was sittin' there I took off my snow glasses so I could see well, and, see better of course, and went on across and well I was just worried and more scared than ever then, afraid the ice goin' out, so I went on down the other side which I believe was a little better and I got out and I think it was three miles through ... and when I got out I hadn't put back on the snow glasses and I knew I was goin' snow blind.

00:01:12

And I knew what that was 'cuz I've been snow blind before. So, I put my dogs out where I was spotted them. I knew where they was. I ... there's only one thing to do to snow blindness that's what tea on a tea leaves on it and get into the dark if you can and well I always turn my leader lose so I tied all my dogs up but my leader so I'd know where they was because I knew I was goin' happen and made me some tea leaves for a start and fed my dogs and got under my canvas. Well, if I didn't have a time for about three days, but in that entire three days that I was there, I don't think one hour out of the 24 hours that my leader didn't come there and scratch on that canvas. I'd speak to 'im and he'd go away, another hour or so he'd be back but boy that was really something. But when I hooked him up to get out of there, I think that was the tickledest dog team I ever hooked up. Course they'd had a nice long rest, three days a long rest for 'em and they was ready to get out. But not too soon, because I got into Hazelton and ice went out just a day or two afterwards. And of course the Mounted Police was there lookin' for me and I was a quite a bit late and they give me a royal welcome and I stayed there for a couple of days before I went on because the snow was all gone and I knew I had to do somethin' about getting wheels on ... to come with my sled. Muddy, dirty, boy everything and that's that [dead air from 00:02:45 to 00:03:05 – voices in the background]

00:03:05

Well there was a Mountie out to meet and just lookin' for me he said everyday he'd rode out, he had a horse, rode out, it was about 6 or 7 miles to where the river left the ... trail left the river and he said he rode out everyday. I was ... they'd been expectin' for the last 2 or 3 weeks but it was sloppy. You know how sloppy it can it get when it's thawin' and the snows a leavin' and it just about pulled on bare ground. And that muddy mud like you get up there. Well he took me to his cabin and they had barn there and I put my dogs out and they fed 'em and one of them got me some dry clothes and another give me somethin' to eat and another one went over after mail, the mail ... post office there. He come back with a whole handful of mail and well I was busy talkin' to them of course and just started my pocket and went on to get somethin' to eat and we was talkin' and one of said Slim, did ya ... why did you get any good news in your mail? Why I says well I dunno, I haven't looked and you know I opened a letter, pulled out a letter out of that bunch and there was a check there from MacDonald for \$50.

00:04:24

Ah, he said, he just thought I might need it when got there and by gee I did need it. I didn't have over three or four dollars, gettin' pretty short of money. But, [inaudible] me I never think of those things and but that \$50 and then of course I got along alright after ... but there was no bank there and with that three or four dollars I went over to get ... went over to the barber shop. Well sir I got up on that chair, I'd never thought now it had been about seven or eight, I dunno how long, six, seven, eight months since I'd shaved or cut my hair or anything and sittin' by a smoke fire you know all that time and I was the hardest lookin' cuss I think I ever met up with. That shaggy long hair, a beard all tangled and just as black as it could be, you would just say I was colored that's all there was to it. I'll swear I didn't know myself

and they give me a shave and hair cut and I went over the restaurant to get somethin' to eat and that's the first I found out that I'd needed glasses. Now before that I've been able to ... to read anything without glasses, my eyes never bothered me at all. But that snow blindness I'd put them on the bum.

00:05:41

And I couldn't read typewritten letters at all. I just couldn't see 'em that's all there was to it so I got the little gal there to tell me what it was and a Doctor come along. And he was ... knew somethin' about glasses and so he just insisted that he'd get me a pair of glasses so he did, he went over and dug me up a pair of glasses and wouldn't charge me anything for 'em boy, them's fine in Canadian, them Mounted Police just can't be beat that's all there was to it, well they was just nothing in Hazelton but I could use. I knew I needed to have wheels on but they was just nothing there to ... nobody to do anything so I had to go to the next town, uh, wasn't Prince George, we'll look that up, but it was about 20 miles and I just was wearin' out my sled and I knew I was so I put some green birch, lashed 'em on the bottom, took the ... cut the green birch, and trimmed them slick and wired them on for runners and that pulled easier than iron did and so when I got this little town, I'd found a place to put them on, police help me again, found a place to put my dogs in and we got some model T Henry wheels. The front wheel of a Ford and [inaudible] about a 3 inch tire and we cut off the axel 'till it fit just ... went as wide as the sled. Well, I put a handle back next to mine and a rod run to the gear in front and rigged it up so when I was turnin' a corner I could hold 'em straight either way until I turned the corner you know it wouldn't crack with my dogs like my sled did so I'd hold them wheels until they would be straight and pull that get far enough where I could turn 'em loose then I'd turn 'em loose and we'd make the corner.

00:07:42

But I think everybody in that little town come to see my dogs. Lord, they was dozens of 'em. Of course, those wolves are strictly one-man dogs that's all there is to. You talk about a one-man dog which I don't know what they are [inaudible] get hold of those wolves they just won't have anything to do with anybody else or they hadn't up until this and the time I was there I thought everybody in town had come see my dogs at least three times and I was over there one day and a little old lady come in. I don't know, she musta been maybe 60, little biddy gal and very timid and everybody else that come the dogs would get just far away as I can and I'd ... I had a rope fixed up so they couldn't get too close and but see this lady come in and oh she says what beautiful dogs, she say I didn't get a chance to see 'em yet and she said oh it's so nice of you to show them to me and I took her over and you know those dogs was right ... every one of 'em, wolves and all right out on their chain just like I as alone comin' right to her, anxious to get to her and she walked up right up and she petted every dog in that bunch and they had just wiggle their tail, they was the ticklest dog to see that little woman that I ever seen. I never figured out but you can't figure out a dog anyhow.

00:09:08

Well, from there I started out with my wheels and that muddy mud, they balled up until I just have a ... well they just clog up against the sled. I bet it was a foot across and times I just have to stop and cut that mud off with an axe, just pry it off and get it off the sled so we could pull it at all. It'd just simply get stuck that's all there was it. Well, come on down the old Caribou Trail and kept getting' better of course all the time and people was always just as good and I had dates ... at least 3 or 4 days ahead, some farmer would send the word out, I dunno how, but I'd get towards somebody come to me and say well, such and such a place they've got dog feed for ya and want ya to stay all night and I would do it and boy that was awful nice but when I got to Williams Lake that was it. They have the Doukhobors there, they're Russian and they have that funny religion, they're somewhat nudist and they won't pay taxes, they won't fight, they ... well I can explain it to ya maybe when I talk to you but it's hard now. But they

just won't do anything, only just farm. They're good farmers, they got about a thousand of 'em over there, long time ago, oh, twenty, thirty years ago and they just had to bust 'em up and they had an awful time with them ever since. Have trouble with them every year. Well it seemed that this fella had come into market with a load of wheat. And they had met 'im and took tax outta the wheat and that made 'em mad so he just pulled off his clothes and went downtown.

00:11:06

Well they arrested him for indecent exposure and put 'em in jail and the rest of 'em out there heard it so they all just pulled off their clothes, about 250 of 'em mind you and come to Williams Lake. And that was the darnedest mess I ever seen. They ... I stayed there for two days just lookin' at 'em. There wasn't anything to look at either, they was ... the poorest shaped woman, they was, I dunno. They look more like animals really than they did women. There was nothing beautiful about 'em that's a sure thing. And they was all mad and they was all downtown and I drove off, left 'em there naked. I don't know what they finally done with 'em.

00:11:50

Well I hit the states, gee I forget that name but I hit Spokane Washington. And there my brother from California met me and course I hadn't seen for him for years and he thought that anybody up in that country was ... must be nuts and so he travelled from there clear to Washington D.C. and gee that was a help too because he'd go ahead and find me a place to stop, well, ah, still the people ahead would send word back a week ahead and Chambers of Commerce would send the word, and of course all the papers was full of it all over the country and they'd send me word that I could camp in their park. Well I had to be right with my dogs all the time so I couldn't go to a hotel and I just happened to ... just had to stop with 'em. So, I would unhook my dogs in the park and take my rope and I had plenty of it, bought some more in fact so I could have rope and put it around so people couldn't get too close to my dogs, or the couldn't get over twenty, thirty feet from 'em and you know it wasn't long for my leader to learn not to go under that rope. He'd go as far as that rope and I say back, back, and he'd go back and lay down. He would go under that rope. So, it was long before I could I lay right down among 'em and go to sleep.

00:13:16

And one day my brother said to me he said tell me why it is, he said those dogs can just make all ... well, he wanna thought they must be something the matter with them, they livin' up in that country like that all the time and I could see that he was just wondering what my ... what kind of a crackpot I was while I was cracked and what about it and I think he thought it was whiskey but he found out that I didn't drink and then he got ... kinda got it [end of recording].