

## Transcript Summary

<b>UAF Oral History Call No:</b>	2016-15-26
<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 speaking mid-sentence] pushin' each other and push each other off of the snow and they was wearin' themselves out pushin' each other off in the snow instead of pullin' the sled. So, I lengthened them and put my leader about one length that made him about 12 foot, pull the tow line and about 6 or 8 feet ahead of the others so when he fell off the trail or got in trouble, why'd he

he'd get out again before the others could get to 'em. Well, when I got to Telegraph Creek, now this was of course from Dawson up it was no mountains at all just rolling country. From Carmacks on, now at Carmacks that is the close to the Coast Range, right at the foot of 'em in fact. And I followed right around the Coast Range close. High, steep mountains, they are very steep the mountains there. While I went around close to them up and down some pretty steep hills from Carmacks to Telegraph Creek they was so steep that I'd have to put on a ... a brake, not with my foot but wrap a rope around my sled and let it drag that way.

00:01:19

That steep of hills. And I got into Telegraph Creek and by that time I had to get rid of one of the dog. They had just killed 'em that's all there was to it and I knew I couldn't protect him all the time and he was a nice little fella so I give 'em to a fella in Telegraph Creek. I just figured it wasn't worth the while to fight for that dog's life all that distance and from Telegraph Creek on, I had about 400 ... a little better than 400 miles so there just wasn't anything. Now a lot of people ask me how the devil did I find my way. Well, you know the direction you wanna go and you don't use a compass, you can't use a compass. Now until I got to Telegraph Creek I was ... had more less trail. It wasn't a ... plumb raw but from Telegraph Creek on it was just raw that's all, you just had to find your own way, that's all there was to it. Well now this is very mountainous from here on and steep banks, steep rivers, very mountainous country.

00:02:29

Mountains that just go clear to the sky, you just wonder how tall they are, lots of game, never seen so much game in any place. I see as many as 62 moose in one day, sheep, caribou, oh it was a ... lots of ... lots of ... fish. Well, I got out of Telegraph Creek a little ways, about 2 days, and a Mounted Police caught up with me. Just out and kinda wanted to know what I was ... how I was gettin' along, and just a friendly visit and he sat down and ... with me that night, spent the night and went back next day but I've often wondered whether he was kidding me or whether ... I found a lake just like he described but he was an artist and he loved that country and he told me about bein' into that country. He wanted to go through with me, if have couldn't have of, but he told me about bein' into that country about 300 miles north of there and he described a lake and the way he described that lake layin' up against the mountains, green trees around it, snow above it, the nice place out in front of it, he'd like to build a cabin there, he just described a lake until I just had that picture in my mind. Well, about, pretty near a week later I run into that lake, exactly as he described it and you know you don't make very far when you're travellin' like that ... ah you see I had to snowshoe ahead.

00:04:14

I'd camp at night, I'd snowshoe ahead all I could, probably 10 miles, then I'd come back to my dogs. I'd hook up my dogs and the next morning and I'd drive that 10 miles then I'd unhook my dogs, put 'em out, snowshoe ahead, come back to my dogs, next morning hook up and make it again. Well, I had to get all my dog feed, I had to break trail, I had to find my direction so I made mighty slow time I'm tellin' ya doin' with those circumstances. But when I come to that lake, I couldn't believe that I was 300 miles north, I was sure I was keepin' my right direction. People say how do you keep your direction? Well, one way to keep your direction is by the sun. Now the sun is due south at 12 o'clock noon. So, it's easy enough. Now, if your clock watch stops, all you got to do is to set up two sticks, one for a shadow, then you set a stick at the other shadow, at the end of the shadow, then you keep stickin' up sticks 'till you get the shortest shadow. When you get the shortest shadow you have 12 o'clock noon and your sticks are north and south. And you shadow is heading north. So, you know where you are. Well, anyhow, I was just wondered about that lake it worried me a lot and I said gee, I surely can't be lost but here's that

lake and that fella told me it was 300 miles north so I said well, just guess I'd better go fishin'. So I did. The stream that run out of it was open water and oh, there was trout there just ... I'd never see so many.

00:05:57

I didn't fish in the open water, I went and cut a hole through the ice about a foot and drop anything you want to through there and you're just pull out trout, well I pulled out about 300 pound. I split 'em in two and of course they is ... by the time I got 'em split in two while they about froze. And I laid 'em up on a frame and built a fire under 'em, smoke and that thawed 'em out, of course I put canvas over the fish after the frame after I got it just over the top of 'em so it would hold the heat in. And in about two hours they had thaw out and then I'd let my fire go out and here in about 3 or 4 hours they would freeze and then I'd build a fire again and about 3 days I was around there I had some nice dried fish. I had enough fish I figured if I was lost and got into a bad game country why, I would be alright. But, anyhow I got to ... one day I was coming along and I would get a moose, say boy, I'd kill a moose, well you didn't want to just throw it away and a moose weighted a lot so I'd dry that, that would take time, I was just takin' my time comin' through there because I had to many a [inaudible] I didn't carry much stuff, very little stuff. You just couldn't that was just all there was to it and live mostly off the country.

00:07:24

Well, anyhow one day I was comin' down a river and two moose jumped up, they was both cows and one was ahead of the other runnin' and right straight from him, one had her a head way in the air and they've got a way of holdin' their head up and lookin' first one side and then they'll lookin' back at ya, and I said well that heads a good shot so I just pulled up my rifle, I had my sled throwed over on one side and [mail?] on its side and the dogs yippin' so I just pulled a bead on that head and pulled the trigger and both of those moose when down ... I ... it had killed a cow that I shot at, glanced and hit this other in the back, I killed two moose with one shot. I don't believe anybody ever done that before. And Lord, that just made me sick. Well I left a lot of meat that time but I dried a lot too I'm tellin' ya about that. [dead air from 00:08:16 to 00:08:20]

00:08:20

Another way to find your [inaudible] another way to find your direction is by your trees. You know everything that you ... grows to the south that's because about 90% of the sun is to the south so every ... your biggest limbs and everything like that, is to the south, your barest mountains is on the north. I didn't even have a map because that country has ... has no map that is accurate or didn't at that time. They didn't have much of a map at all but I knew just about the direction I wanted go which was about south-east and so that's the direction I'd keep. I might strike a stream, I would follow up for maybe 2 or 3 days up a stream and it was gonna off course well then I'd strike another stream that would take me back onto my course and that's way I got along. I imagine I that I travelled about 450 miles a comin' a through there. Well, by the time I got ... begin to get out it was so late that the Indians, the trappers, there's some trappers in there, because I see some tracks after I got further down river and I struck this river, I knew it was the one that I had to come on and so I started down it. Well, the sun was out by that time and I was wearin' my snow glasses a little and worried a lot because I was afraid the river was gonna go out.

00:09:58

And if the river went out I was just blowed up, that's all there was to it. And I come to a box canyon. Well you know what a box canyon is so I don't need to tell ya. Well this was awfully fast and over the middle of it was pretty near all open but along the banks it was frozen. Well now I went over that top it had took me a week to get my outfit over there. So, I just decided I'd go down the bank, one of those

banks, down that box canyon on that ice that was frozen to side, so I'd have to cut away, I'd take my axe and I'd cut a ditch for my upper runner to run in. Some places there wasn't 3 feet, some places 5 or 6 feet out into the river but some places it's up close so the dogs just crowd right up to the bank and I had a quite a time.

00:10:48

Watched my sled close to get it outta that rut, why if it went out. But I just had to take a chance that's all there was to it. I got about half way through, the river was a little slower and for about 100 yards there it was ... I imagine it was about 3 miles through that canyon. For about 100 miles, about 100 yards there it was frozen pretty well across, places into wasn't, well I looked at that and I'd be watchin' the other side and it looked like it was better than the side I was on and you know the green pasture is on the other side all the time. Well I come to this place I said gee, that's alright I believe and why I'd done this I don't know, I was coming on without snowshoes and snowshoes was on the sled and here I steer across the river and well I thought I would go to the other side and take a look is really what in my mind because I never spoke to my dogs at all, I just left them where I was. If I'd of tried to drive my leader across they'd probably wouldn't have went because he knew more about snow and that ice was dangerous.

00:11:58

Well I got about half way across and I felt my ice give away. There was a piece about 6-foot square, maybe bigger that I just ... it just give away and went into the river. Well, I knew what was gonna happen. They upper part ... that water was goin' to catch that upper part of the ice, the ice was gonna turn over and I was gonna be under that ice that's all there was to it. And if I got under that ice, that was the end of it. Well, I just took two steps right quick, right on the way I was goin' and when ... give a jump for that bank. Well the ice went under me at the same time. And I lift with my stomach right, my belt just about on that ice. You know the ice was fairly rough thank God and but my snowshoes was in the water, the water was quite swift and boy I was clawin' for all I was worth to keep out of that river. The snowshoes had draggin' me down and me hangin' on tryin' to drag up and pretty soon something happened. I believe that ice clogged or somethin' and kinda dammed that channel up because I felt the water quit draggin' on my shoes and just kinda lift. You could just image what happened.

00:13:17

And while that ice was lifin', just I don't think it was a minute and a half I made up I got my snowshoes out and sittin' on the ice and got hold of my snowshoes in my hand and pulled them up an there I was sittin' on the ice. And boy, I was just shaky and stiff, I was in a fix I'm tellin' ya I was played to get up, I was afraid to do anything. And, I looked over and see my dogs, I says that's it, so I spoke to my leader and I says come here fella [end of recording].