

ILLUANI



INSIDE THE LIFE AND CULTURE OF KODIAK ISLAND



Dave Kubiak and Ed Opheim Sr.



Florence Pestrikoff



Susan Malutin



Iver Malutin

GUANI KATURTUKUT

"We are gathered here"

April 2nd – 6th, 2001

Student Participants

Janelle Christiansen
Carmen Ambrosia
Gennifer Seay
David Gerard
Basil Larionoff
Danielle Santillana
Arnie Nelson
LaToya Lukin
Ivan Chistiansen
Danny Clarion
Jacquie Seeger
Crystal Bartleson
Marjeena Griffin
Katherine Berns
Sabrina Anderson
Rodney Knagin
Marlyss Eggemeyer
John Ignatin

Loren Petersen
George Shanagin
Erling Ursin
Duane Eluska
Ralph Joe
Lorraine Eggemeyer
Jenna Downs
Deric Schmidt
Will Azuyak
Michelle Johnson
Sean Brester
JR Amodo
Josephine Lind
Nicole Downs
Hope Chichenoff
Lukas Serjeant
Patty Conley

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Florence Pestrikoff cover photo courtesy of the Alutiiq Museum
Susan Malutin cover photo: Teri Schneider
Other cover photos: Eric Waltenbaugh

This first re-issue of *Illuani* magazine is dedicated to
all those who came together to create it originally:

The Elders
who shared their knowledge and stories of this place in past issues,

The Students
(now adults) who recorded them,

and

Dave Kubiak
who made it all happen by creating and sustaining this project for so many
years.

We thank you all for providing an excellent model for us to follow as we
continue the valuable work that you started.

NOTE TO THE READER

Elwani...Iluani...Illuani?

What's in a word? As the Alutiiq language becomes refined in its written format (remember, it has been an oral language for at least 7,000 years and was only put into written form when the Orthodox priests began the work about 250 years ago), it has gone through a number of changes from its early Russian format to the latest English linguistical interpretation. Recently Dr. Jeff Leer from the Alaska Native Language Center and a number of Alutiiq speakers from throughout the region revised the orthography (how you spell a language). Today, we spell Illuani a little differently, but the meaning remains the same. It is pronounced something like "ill-lwah-nee."

-- Teri Schneider

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The week of April 2-6, 2001, High School students from Old Harbor, Ouzinkie, Port Lions, Karluk, Chiniak, Akhiok, and Danger Bay gathered in the town of Kodiak for an Immersion experience titled 'Guani Katurtukut' (we are gathered here).

Students and teachers gathered this week to be trained in recording traditional ecological knowledge by Henry Huntington. Reasons for, and the value of this type of research were explored along with ethical and technical considerations of embarking on these types of projects.

On Wednesday of that week, April 4, 2001, students conducted the interviews contained in this volume at the Alutiiq Museum and several other places. The biggest thanks must go to those who volunteered to share their stories with the students. Without their kindness and willingness to share, this publication would not exist. (Ed Opheim Sr., Florence Pestrikoff, Dr. Lydia Black, Susan Malutin, Iver Malutin, Dennis Knagin, Ole Mahle, Ruth Dawson, and Dave Kubiak). Unfortunately, not all the interviews from this evening were written up due to some technical failures with tapes (a lesson in itself).

This publication marks the revival of *Iluani* Magazine, started by Dave Kubiak and his students in 1976. The magazine will be a integral part of what students do in the rural schools of the Kodiak Island Borough School District.

Special thanks go out to Dave Kubiak who's guidance, steadfast support, and willingness to share his time and experience have made this project a reality.

Teri Schneider deserves the utmost credit for her deep rooted passion for and steadfast dedication to reviving the magazine, which drove us all to follow through with the project.

Thanks also go to the Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository for providing technical support, space, and equipment for these interviews to take place.

Thanks to all the teachers and staff members that made the Guani Katurtukut week possible. Through working together as a group we have started this valuable work rolling again.

And finally I'd like to thank the following rural teachers: Jennie Akers, Renee Weiler, Phil Johnson, Kim Triplett, and Chris Huehnergath, who have endured my badgering about deadlines for this publication and have worked diligently with students to do the painstaking work of writing up the articles you see here after the initial fun of the interviews had passed.

All proceeds from the sale of this publication will go to buying equipment and materials to continue and sustain this research.

--- Eric Waltenbaugh

FORWARD

They say 'you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone' and with Iluani, that was certainly true. Half the time we were unable to sell the magazines we printed which simply paid for the printing cost. But the students loved seeing their work in print and were always so proud of what they had done. At the high school level, school work does not always produce pride in the students. Oh, we tell them to be proud, but that real dignity that comes with the creation of something valuable...that is always special. I discovered that when I first started teaching...there were things that students paused to consider, and then there were the work sheets and the drills that produced yawns, or scowls, or worst of all...nothing. But when I stepped off the beaten path of chapter reviews and asked a class to tell me a good story, a real story from their lives...that really produced results. I remember one especially, of a young man accompanying his father on a crab trip, and having the crab tank split on them and flood the boat, and how he and his father and the crew bailed out the water with thousands of buckets and saved themselves and their boat. I think it was the way this student of mine conveyed the courage and tenacity of his father that most struck me.

So when the opportunity arose to teach a district sponsored class based on the Foxfire method of teaching communication skills, I jumped at it. Iluani (Alutiiq for roughly 'the interior of it') was the result. There we were, recording and transcribing the life experiences of our older citizens, our collective Grandmas and Grandpas, so to speak. It was real and the students knew that they were doing something quite different and extraordinary. Oh yes, and it was hard work too. Every minute of tape resulted in two pages of hand written transcription...real work...and now it seems like the olden days, because we had no computers...so there was plenty of copying and recopying, along with photography, darkroom work, filing and cataloging, legal questions, layout and design (with rubber cement and scissors, no less), and finally the printer and the waiting and then...magazine sales. We often worked weekends and into the evenings. Not only did these students publish their writing and the stories of their Elders, but they learned a whole lot about the work of communication and most importantly, about themselves.

So when Teri Schneider asked me to meet with Eric Waltenbaugh, here was an opportunity to awaken, after more than ten years of sleep, the Iluani Project again. Worksheets and chapter summaries have their place, but so does a learning opportunity that has the validity and vitality of the lives of the community as its resource. The students recognize this and it excites them. We all need to support Iluani again, be willing to share our experiences, and not miss this opportunity to meet and assist these young people in their worthy endeavor.

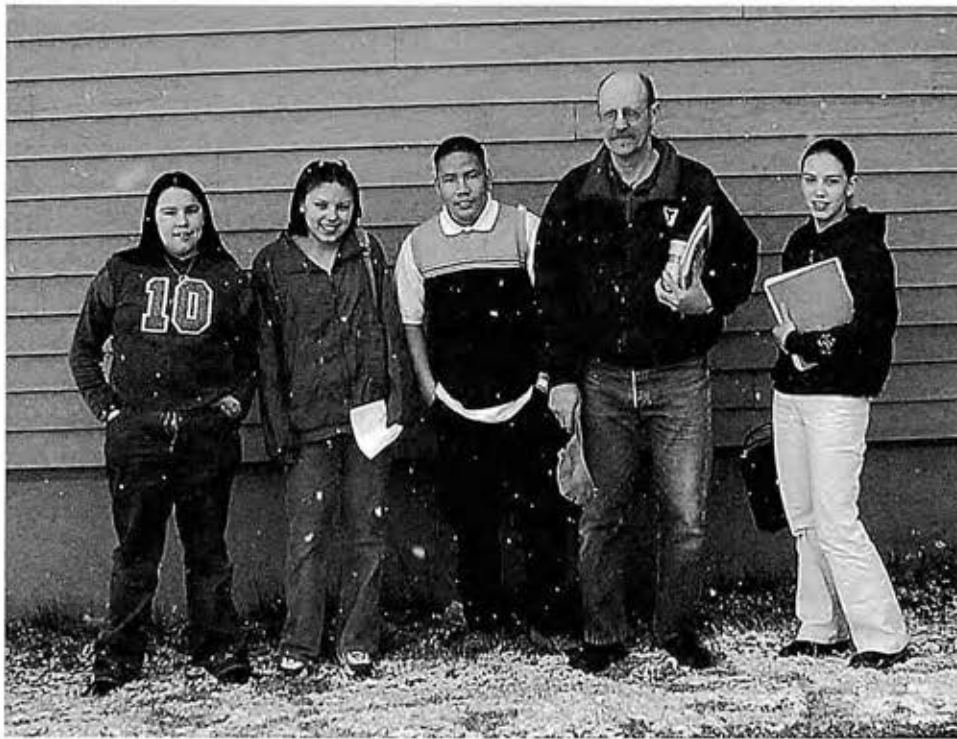
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DAVE KUBIAK

THE VISIONARY,

THE GUY WHO STARTED IT ALL



Dave with his interviewers after the interview

INTERVIEW:
Josephine Lind
Marlyss Eggemeyer
JR Amodo
Katherine Berns

STORY:
Marlyss Eggemeyer

PHOTO
Jennie Akers

When my teacher told me that I was going to do an interview, I had no clue what to bring or what to do. I felt nervous and unprepared. When we sat in Mr. Waltenbaugh's office to conduct the interview we didn't know what to expect. I would say that the interview turned out to be interesting and funny. I think we all felt a bit less shy.

My first impression when I met Mr. Kubiak was "Is he mean or Is he nice?" When I met him he was a really nice and funny guy. I told myself that this was going to be easy and not to be shy. The main reason why I wanted to interview Mr. Kubiak was because I found out that he was the editor and a teacher of the magazine *Iluani* and I wanted to know how hard it was for his students to write their interviews. Was it fun? Was it boring? Stuff like that.

Marlyss: "How was it difficult for your students to write their interviews?"

Dave: "It was a lot of work. I think one minute of tape is two pages of writing. Thirty minutes of tape would be sixty pages of writing. It was a lot of dogwork. On the other hand, that work that you're doing is basic research. If you're a social scientist, which is what you're doing, you're a social scientist, you're... social science researchers, bottom line. You think you're students, but

"...that work that you're doing is basic research... you're social science researchers, bottom line."

you're not. What you're doing is incredibly valuable stuff. It's a lot of hard work. It's like fishing, but not getting all good sets, it's like getting all scratch sets. Over and over. That was the hard part, and convincing students that it was worth it to keep it up. And I remember they just got down there and burnt up the pens, but they didn't, ya know. "I don't feel like it today man, I forgot my tapes, man."

"The hardest part was being shy with people that you don't know. That's what's scary, and not everyone's kind. They say "yeah sure" Katherine, they say "yeah sure", I'll do it" and you go talk to them and they're grumpy, and they snap at you, and they're nasty, and they correct you. Since you don't have a relationship with that person, I mean in terms of knowing them, and they're not like your uncle or aunt or someone, that's just the way they are. He's kind of funky and you don't take offense or you get shy or you feel like you are in danger, that blows it. You gotta be professional and know what's coming.

"You gotta let him go, it's their trip and if they want to be grumpy, Marlyss, let them be grumpy. If they change the subject and you can't get them back, let them go, because what they are talking about they might feel is more important than what you ask. We had somebody interviewed like on baking bread, ya know, and they started talking about baking bread and immediately they got off on what their mother was like. And the kids tried to get him back to baking bread. The interview was this beautiful story about the mother who was blind and who was married to a sea otter hunter and all this stuff. You have to be ready for the unexpected. So if someone lays some trip on you, and it's "be

there" for the moment, don't get stuck with what your idea is. If you get stuck with an idea, what you gotta get out of this person, but they won't tell you something else. What they are telling you is really cool. Go with it, because it would be a lot easier to interview. Its okay to be afraid, and its okay to be shy, but you have to overcome that. You just have to go and do your job. If you're shy, speak up, let it go, say it, do it. Make it happen."

Marlyss: "Why did you start *Iluani*?"

Dave: "Because I was a brand new teacher. I graduated from high school in Kodiak and came back here to teach because I thought I could do a better job than some of the teachers I had. Like I wanted to make a difference ya know! I was trying to teach things that kids didn't really care about. And one day I had a lesson where I wanted them to tell a good story about what it was like to live in Alaska.

"I wanted to make a difference ya know!"

"A guy named Howard Peterson was here in town and told a story about him and his dad running a crab boat down to Seattle and having the tank break on them. They bailed it out with five-gallon buckets. The engine room was flooded, they were out in the gulf, in a big storm, and they bailed it out with five-gallon buckets. That was like the coolest thing I had ever heard in my life. He (Howard) thought it was cool too. He said it was a big adventure for him.

"And then this gal came by and her name was Ann Vick. She came from a think tank in Washington [D.C.], an educational think tank. And she proposed that Kodiak might be one of the schools where they would do an oral history project called Foxfire. And I went and I listened and I thought, 'Wow, this is just what I did', only this was organized, and you know how to do it, and you know how to set it up, you know how to make it happen. Wow, kids can be doing stuff that's meaningful, and valuable, and produce a product that is valued by the community! So that was basically how it started."

Marlyss: "When did your first magazine first get published?"

Dave: "1976. We produced a tremendous amount of material, but when Eliot Wigginton started Foxfire [a nationally know oral history magazine produced by students], he is a genius kind of guy that lives up in the rural back in the hill country in Raburn Gap, Georgia, he would tell you " Publish right away, don't mess around, get published right away, get something published right away, publish all the time." We couldn't get that together, so we published once a year. You have to wait for a reward for like a year. You have to bust your butt. Work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work. And not do it and not get any reward for it 'til the end of the year except for a grade.

"Well, Eliot Wigginton was right, you want to publish right away, get something out, get the reward, 'cause the reward is not just a grade from any class, the real reward is doing something meaningful, something people see and people go "WOW" or "I like that" or "That was cool" or "You did a good job." Or your name under a picture you took or a story you wrote. So we published two of those of 150,160 pages a piece within just a couple of months of each other at the end of the school year. Everything they had to get through the funnel. All this material, all the kids working, all these photographs, all this stuff channel, channel, channel through a little tiny hole, and it bruises everybody's writing.

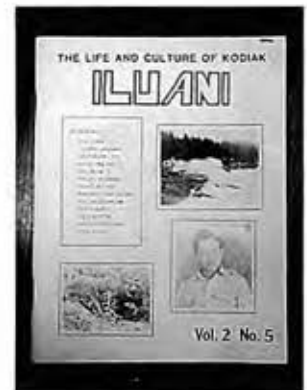
"We were working up at the school 'til like nine, ten o'clock at night, we were working on Saturdays, working all day Saturday. I gave special credit in here to these kids, to the layout team. These kids in particular, these people, these few people were really responsible for doing an incredible amount of work. The photo team, they like did all the photos from when the kids like dropped out on the first. Learning to do dark room, its cool, but its a lot of detail and got to be really picky, picky you know you don't reach on one tank with a hand, then reach on the other tank, cause if you go backwards you poison the tanks you always gotta go this way. You wash your hands and go this way. It's gotta be perfect, gotta go the nice way, you gotta focus it and all that stuff. That's contrast."



1980 Issue



1983 Issue



1986 Issue

"Wow, kids can be doing stuff that's meaningful, and valuable, and produce a product that is valued by the community!"

Marlyss: "Would you help participate in making another one?"

Dave: "As an Ex- officio member, yeah. I'm busy with guiding people on bear tours, and commercial halibut fishing and cod fishing, and I still have and active salmon's permit. I could go again and I would if the price went up. I still have fishing machines, and got a family, so, I would never work for the school district again. I would do it because it would benefit the kids, and I really like teaching, I LOVE TEACHING!!"

Marlyss: "Where did you have the magazine published?"

Dave: "Originally we had it published with Kodiak quick copy. And they had a printer who when he got the job he was angry, cause the job was so big, and he was an alcoholic and he splattered all those photographs with black ink. Then he blamed it on us. So we ended up going to AT publishing [in Anchorage] which I think is actually who does the Anchorage Daily News. They did a beautiful job, they were very professional and didn't mess around. And you never found that kind of horrible baloney going on in the dark room."

Marlyss: "How did you come up with the name *Iluani*?"

Dave: "Ok, now see the difference, 'Elwani' it was on a picture of a boat. We did not name the magazine after the boat. I wanted to know what it meant. 'Elwani' looked to me like it was Spanish. So I started asking. Nina Olsen told me that 'Elwani' meant 'getting at the inside' or 'inside'. Later on we became more educated to Alutiiq culture, and to a lot of things. I went back to Nina and said, 'we can't find this in the Alutiiq dictionary,' and she said, 'Well, it's not spelled right. That's like pigeon Aleut.' But it's 'Iluani'. So we changed the name of the magazine to match it."

Marlyss: "Did your students ever have to redo their interviews?"

Dave: "Yeah but, ah, an interview is best the first time because you're going to have certain magic there. You're going to have certain magic the first interview."

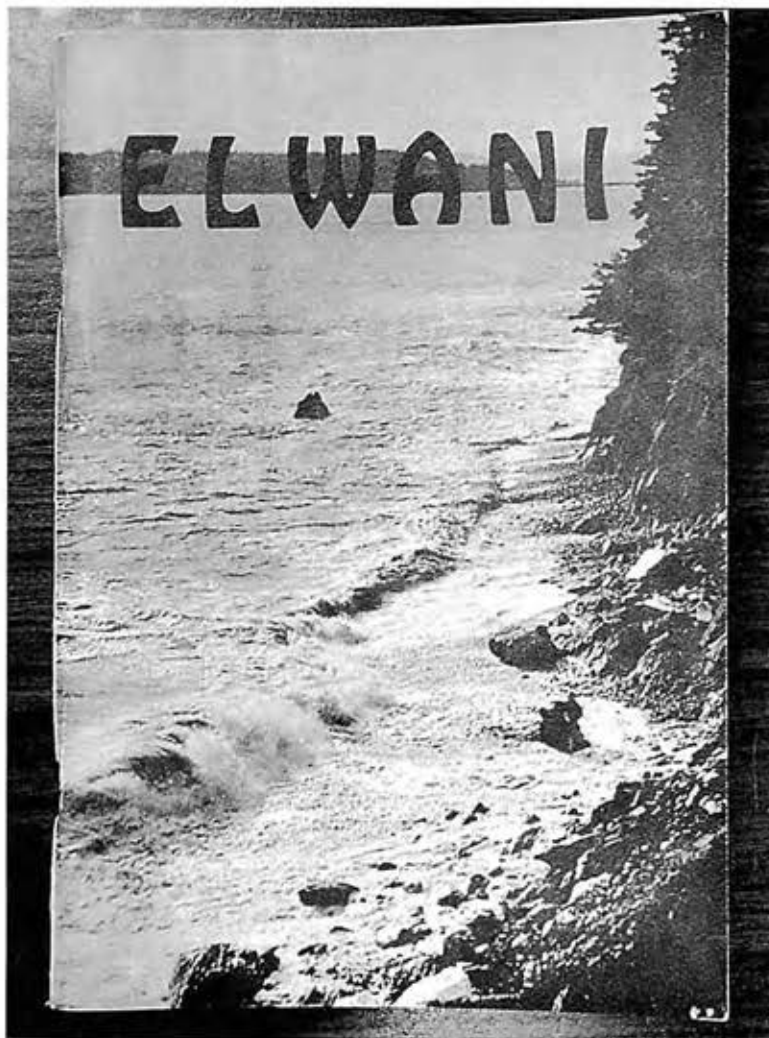
Marlyss: "Were there any times you felt like giving up?"

Dave: "No, I don't think so. As a teacher I didn't get to go on a lot of the interviews and, I wish I had been able to. It's very painful to hear a student do an interview and see him missing some mind-blowing chance. On the other hand it also meant that I was back in the classroom and I really couldn't tell you what happened at the interviews, why it didn't work. Kids come back and say it didn't work, the person wasn't there, couldn't get him."

Marlyss: "Do you miss publishing *Iluani*?"

Dave: "No. The publishing part was just a lot of work. We didn't have the technology, didn't have the good computers, didn't have the digital equipment, and we did not have school district support."

A couple of things that I learned while we were interviewing Mr. Kubiak was what it was like to make a magazine and all the mean and nasty "DOGWORK" that his students had to do. To me the most interesting and best part of the interview was when he was telling us how tired and hard it was for his students to keep going. I don't think there would be anything different that I would change if I had to go back and interview Mr. Kubiak. It was one of the most interesting and great interviews I have ever done!!



The first issue of Elwani, published in 1976

ED OPHEIM SR.



A LIVING PIECE OF HISTORY

When we were asked to do this interview I never thought I would meet a man like Ed Opheim Sr. He had so many stories to tell. On my way to his home I was finalizing my questions for him with the other people who were going to do the interview. I was a little nervous and could tell the others were too.

When we stepped into his house we confronted a very happy man who was more than ready to tell a group of kids his life story, and we loved it. His house was filled with pictures of his life and they alone told a story. His house smelled of a life that was lived very well and housed a man who has no regrets and many accomplishments. I feel that it is very important for people to be aware of the history of where they live. That day Ed Opheim Sr. taught us what Kodiak was like in the past, how many businesses started here, and what the people were like. Two other people and myself chose to write articles on Ed Opheim Sr. and the interview that we conducted.

--- Gennifer Seay

INTERVIEW: Basil Larionoff, Janelle Christiansen, Duane Eluska, David Gerard, Deric Schmidt, Carmen Ambrosia, Sabrina Andersen

STORY: Gennifer Seay, Erling Ursin, Loren Petersen

Photos courtesy of Eric Waltenbaugh

“THE HARDEST WORK I EVER DID”

I interviewed Ed Opheim Sr., one of the most accomplished men that I have met. I chose to write this article because my father is a logger and I wanted to learn more about what he does. I find it very important and interesting to learn about how logging was started in Kodiak and the surrounding villages because it's my family's trade. I also find it important for the people of Kodiak to be aware of a man who holds so much knowledge of Kodiak. It helps us to better understand where we live.

Ray (teacher from Old Harbor): “How did you run the saw mill?”

Ed: “Well, I ran my sawmill on my own. During the depression years I bought a little sawmill, I think the first one on Spruce Island. In fact, I know it was. But on account of the depression years there were no supermarkets. I built that saw mill and the tidal wave came along and lifted our home, warehouses, boat shops and the barn. Our clothes were all we had left. And of course it never got in the newspaper. That little building there (pointing at a picture) that's the first log house built on Kodiak Island long before the borough ever came here. You know what I mean?”

Ed [talking about how he built his dories]:

“The way I did it I owned the sawmill but note the saw mill had a lot of lumber and no sale. So in the winter-time I picked the choice clear spruce. I hand planed it. I didn't have a planer. I hand planed all those boards, 24 foot long on both sides of it.

“Here was Kodiak waterfront, (referring to a photo) There was a bunch of little wood boats, those were the boats that flooded the canneries.



*Opheim Dory in False Pass
Photo: Ed Opheim Sr. Collection*

Erling: “What’s the easiest wood to work with?”

Ed: “Spruce, the native spruce right here on Spruce Island and Kodiak. It’s the finest wood to work with.

“It was after the tidal wave I made up my mind to leave the woods because I was 60 years old. And whoever lives after 60 years old in the woods? So I figured if I want to live anymore than I better get out of there. So what happened? The tidal wave came and I was out of the woods. The saw mill was drifting on the foundation out in the bay so we got the Cat, pulled and hauled all the machinery ashore, poured the new foundation and here’s what I built. See this thing (pointing at a picture of the saw mill that he built) here the new saw mill, I built the dock so the boat can come along side and unload the lumber, we turned out about 10,000 pieces a day three of us and there was a beautiful building.”



Opheim home and saw mill at Pleasant Harbor on Spruce Island after the tidal wave. “It took years to build and finish, and a few minutes to destroy.”

Photo: Ed Opheim Sr. collection

Ray: What size blades?

Ed: About a 50 inch blade. I could have put the double blades you know on the top for bigger logs. But the logs generally run about 3 1/2 ft. standard, so we didn't have to do that. But I got pretty skillful at it all those years. I started out in a little mill and nobody helped me. I'd go by the book to start with, common sense. You can burn up a saw pretty fast if you don't know what your doing. But you know, I don't know why all my life I chose the hardest things to do. I couldn't have picked a tougher job than going into the woods and logging.

"Imagine going up to a tree and looking at it, 4ft with crosscuts 7ft long you know a guy's got to be crazy! You're standing there and it's raining and you have oil skins on. You get the other guy on the other end and pretty soon you've got a tree down. Then you've got to cut the limbs off, so you stand there half the day chopping the limbs off. You know how many trees you can knock down with 2 guys? If you do three trees, boy, you know your doing good. You spend the next day dragging these out of the woods stacking them on the bank. The whole tree. Then you push them into the water in the boom and tow then home. Can you talk about any harder work?

Ray: "I've got another question about skiffs. What designs did you use? Were they double ended dories or single ended dories?"

Ed: "Well a regular skiff is wide because you wanna pack maybe some heavy stuff and then there's the purpose like if you want to use a seine net or a gill net. Then a dory is better for gill netting because both sides taper into the bow and stern, see. So when you're pulling a net along you don't keep catching. The corners on the skiff near the stern and on a dory, it comes around. As you pull it along the line, the cork line, it just blends along nice and smooth. And it's a better boat in rough weather."

Ray: Were they lacked or butted?

Ed: No they were side planked. You know just one plank on the other with the



*32foot Opheim Dory
Photo: Ed Opheim Sr. Collection*

jarred stuff you put in the seams.

As a student in high school whenever I am asked to do history they always hand me a book. With this experience I have learned the value of history spoken truthfully and honestly from the source. I believe now that to really learn history is to talk to those who have actually lived it first hand. Books teach just fine but people teach with care.

Ed Opheim Sr. taught me the history of where I live. He proved to me that getting somewhere in life is hard work. He introduced me a very large and vital part of the history of where my family lives and how the business that they work for was started in these parts. Ed Opheim Sr. also brought to my attention how drastically the times have change from when he first came to Kodiak to when I came to live here. He made life in Kodiak become much more than just people and stories; he gave it an identity. I believe that was the most valuable information that the people of Kodiak could ever receive.

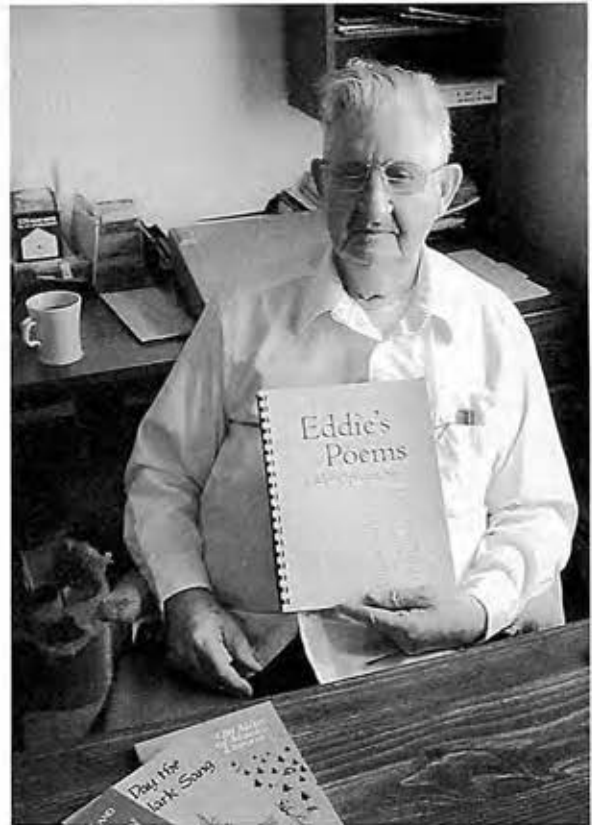
--- Gennifer Seay



*Natural spruce knees ready to be
cut for dory ribs.*

Photo: Ed Opheim Sr. collection

Life is what you make of it



Ed Posing with his book of poems.

Photo: Eric Waltenbaugh

When I first heard that I was going to interview Ed Opheim Sr., I was scared. I never was good at interviewing someone. Then when I heard that I was being accompanied by six or seven other students, the pressure kind of went away.

My first impression of Mr. Opheim was kind of humorous. His hair was all messed up. He was just happy that we came to interview him. It was pretty funny. He made us feel right at home.

I chose to write about his schooling, because even though he didn't get too much schooling, he still accomplished a lot! Also there were lots of good stories in between his schooling. Here were his comments when asked what kind of schooling he had.

Ed: "My schooling consisted of ah, where I was raised out on Popof island in the Shumagins, I never went to school there and where we lived in Balboa Bay over on the Peninsula, it was a place where my father settled. In them days, there was no bears on the peninsula on account of everybody was allowed to shoot bears so they killed them all off. So my father had cattle there and we made it all alone, one family, and it was a beautiful place. Nothing but grass flats for miles and we lived right along side of Mt. Pavlof.

"So we lived in a barabara made out of sod. We had no kids to play with, so there were no distractions. We had nobody to argue with but ourselves and we never argued. We were like Adam and Eve and a family out in space. We got along wonderful and a there was a beautiful country. Get up in the morning, us kids you know, when my father and others got up in the morning at 6:00 o'clock, we got up. Us kids got up. When they went out the door, we went with them. When the rest went out to play, my older brother and I had a job of going out into those grass flats and bringing the cattle in to milk in the mornings. We had two cattle dogs so us kids as small as we were had

chores and when a 7:00 o'clock at night we were ready for bed. There was no radios to listen to and no TV, so we had it pretty good when you think about it.

"They finally decided, my parents that is, to give us some religion first. So they sent us to Woody Island. I guess it didn't catch on. But then we went down to Seattle. We were in about every school in Puget Sound, but I never got to learn the teacher's names we moved so often. We went into Montana, us kids, and over there they had schooling in the summer time on account of white-outs in the winter. But we had a five mile road, wagon road to school and of course other farmer kids would come riding in on horses and there was about ten of us kids. I guess and we had a little log shack with a tin roof and a sod floor and that was it with a blackboard – we had no benches no writing benches. There was no writing paper so everything was done on the blackboard so I didn't learn very much.

"I went to a central big school in Seattle but those classrooms had 40 kids with one teacher so we didn't learn too much there either and one woman taking care of a classroom with 40 children was hard.

"Coming back to Alaska when I was 13 I went to school in Ouzinkie. There was one teacher there but she only had 12 kids. But she had 12 grades so I never learned anything there either. So what I picked up on my way, now for instance I wrote three books and it was a determination on what I wanted to do and I suppose I did pretty good without schooling. So what they hammer into your head at school it's what you make up your mind you want to do. I met kids that way too in my life time that felt they didn't have to go to school and they did good so I guess it's the kids making up their minds on what they want to do and follow it up."

Erling: "How did you get water living in the barabara?"

Ed: "We all had long arms from packing water. We had a crick, oh the furthest gully from the house or barabara. We had buckets and us kids would get one, two buckets and us kids um, but the barabara was oh maybe about as big as this living room here [20 feet to 30 feet] and we didn't have beds. We had little box made out of drift wood and uh we had caribou hides for mattresses and uh we thought we had it pretty good. So we had Civil War blankets and so we did ok but the floor was drift planking, just what came in from the beach and uh it was rough and so was the inside of the barabara. It was split logs maybe about that high on the sides [about five feet] and it was pretty low and a little window on the south end, so that was that. But it got heated from the kitchen stove where my father and mother had a combination bed room and a kitchen. The barabara was dug into the hillside, uh the backside of it uh the corner, so the sod and the hillside all blended in you know the grass growing on top and the flowers.

"It was right on the trail of a migration heard of caribou from the Bering Sea side and a oh the mountain maybe a pass through the mountains there and a I would say about sixteen hundred feet. And the deer would come down on the Bering Sea side over the corner of the barabara and at night time we could hear the deer or caribou walking across the corner of the barabara and a down across the creek and the flats and down into what they call Chadoo Bay, Pavlof Bay. It was their migration route and then up through the peninsula and further. The caribou was what we lived off of our big supply was caribou and of course fish all over the whole country, salmon creeks and porcupine, and rabbits. We were really well off as far as subsistence in the country..."

"...After the title wave, I started putting stories together little odds and ends and I would have a box here filled with little notes and carry them around in my pocket all day. In the middle of the night I would turn on the light and start writing and putting the story together. So get up next morning, do a lot of work and then every once in a while like if I am eating and I think of something, I will stop and write two to three pages then I put these things together and I have a story."

Erling: Do you still write?

Ed: "Yea I write a few stores here that are factual. Of course there was the Montana — you know that one on Montana is fiction, but it could be true. If you will read it and think about it, it could be true."

"I think it was ok for me to be grown up as I was. I don't look back and say I wasn't educated right. I think I picked up a really good education because I met about every nationality of people in this world through the central school and the central school was situated right along the border of China Town. So I mingled with the Chinese people and Japanese people. And we always got along wonderful, the kids. We had a really good relationship so it didn't matter. We had people from every country in that big school. So I had a good chance to learn that there is no difference wherever you go we are all the same. When the kids get together there were never any arguments or any rough play. The kids always get along. There are never any disputes with the kids. So I think I had a good schooling."

Ed Opheim Sr. had lots of good stories to tell, but lots of his information was when he talked about his schooling. It was kind of funny because he made school seem unnecessary. He brought up the fact that he wrote three books and here he barely learned a thing in school. After the interview was done he made sure and told me that your schooling is only what you make of it. But for your own good he would recommend you to do your absolute best in school.

--- Erling Ursin



Ed Opheim's 3 books; The Day the Meadowlark Sang, Old Mike at Monks Lagoon, and The Memoirs and Saga of a Cod Fisherman's Son.

Photo: Eric Waltenbaugh

“Gospodi! Look at the fish! Oi Gospodi!”

When I first heard that we were going to go and interview someone I thought that it would be just like interviewing any other person, you know just sitting there just trying to keep them talking, but it wasn't. When we first arrived at Ed Opheim Sr.'s house from what I saw outside I was able to tell that he was or is a fishermen. The coils of line, the buoys, and some kind of little pots for shrimp or something all next to a shed gave him away as being a fishermen. As we walked inside he greeted us with a handshake. The inside reminded me of my grandma and grandpa's house. I don't know what it was. It could have been just the plainness of the house, but it wasn't plain. It was in a way full too. Or it could have been just seeing an old person in the house. He didn't look too old, I thought maybe 60 or 70, but he was 92! He looked so full of life at 92.

I choose to write these parts of the interview because I wanted to hear about the fishing and how there were so many fish back then. I wish it were still like that today. The Rolf Christiansen part I did because he was my great grandfather and I wanted to find out what Mr. Opheim knew about him, because he knew him as a friend.

Ed: “Any of your fathers fishermen?”

Group: “Yeah.”

Ed: “Lets go back 60 years ... no better try 70 years. I can remember standing down on the Erskine dock and in the channel I can see a full rigged sail ship, no engines, with just sails. A three square rigger came in the channel. The whole of Kodiak was down there when the ship came in, everyone: kids, women, and everyone. I remember standing on the dock looking out in the channel and here comes a full rigged ship in that narrow channel, and when they got about a little outside the bridge they dropped a chides anchor to slow themselves down and then they held on to it on the ship and paid out as the ship sailed in to the dock. By the time she came along side the dock, and threw the lines ashore she was made fast and half the sail



*Ed Opheim Sr.
Photo: Eric Waltenbaugh*

were already down. Of course there were about twenty men up in the air working on those booms and it was so smooth and so quick there wasn't a whisper. It was done just like there was a magic thing that came and tied up in front of us with the big masts and booms you know the sails. And I went aboard that thing and I didn't realize until I stepped aboard that you could hardly see daylight with all the ropes coming down. They all knew where they belonged and I remember standing on the dock and I looked up and I seen a guy up on the mast making fast the sails and I took one look at him and I said, 'God that's my dad's old cod fishing partner from the Bering Sea!'

“Of course , there were about 20 men up in the air working on those booms, and it was so smooth, and so quick, there wasn't a whisper.”

“So we were surprised to see someone we knew aboard that ship but it was quite a thing back in those days for that to happen to you. You realize what it would cause, how much excitement it would cause? But I seen that and I didn't have a camera. I owned one but I didn't have it with me. But I know there's pictures of that ship here in Kodiak owned by old people. They must have a picture of that, and the only place that you can find it is probably ... does anyone know Gene Erwin? His mother bought a lot of the old stuff that they sold and auctioned off when [someone] passed away. Now that would be something nice to look at to see that picture, but I know that someone has to have that picture.

“Oh yeah well I'm just telling you what happened back in those days around 70 years ago ... a little more than that, about 75 years I guess. I was about 14 or 15 years old at that time so yeah that was a thing that was happening.

“Another thing that happened here, we talk about a big crab and shrimp thing which is all gone but we had something in the 1922 and 23 years that was as big as the crab fishing. There was sailing ships all over the island. Nobody paid any attention to the ones here because they were all out at Shuyak Island in Blue Fox Bay, Red Fox Bay, and Paramanoff Bay. But they were salting herring. There was a big herring boom in those days and it was over in Seldovia, that was one of the main places where they were putting herring up. And of course every little cove had a cannery with a herring saltry. It was a big thing and there was work everywhere. They needed 'gillers,' you know people that picked up herring and cut the gills out. They almost all of them came from Scotland and Ireland, Irish.

“So they were all on those ships, in fact one of the largest ones was a five [mast] ship, an enormous ship. I went aboard one. We went along side, my father knew the captain when he used to —when they would sail together, and my father's boat had a mast —we had a sail boat and come along side and our mast wouldn't even reach the top of the

deck. And there was five of those, a full rig ship. But there was schooners too. We were living on a schooner at the time, a little three mast schooner, and there was several of us small ones, small schooners, and there was some bigger boat up in Blue Fox Bay. Anybody been to Blue Fox Bay?"

Loren: "Yeah."

Ed: "Oh it's a beautiful place, sheltered completely like it's bottled in. [You] come through a little narrow place and inside a big bay, really a scenic place.

"But then there were other ships all around the island, [and in] the Aleutians. I wish I had them out to show you some pictures of boats out in Unalaska, Dutch Harbor. And there was several out there but up and down the coast clear through Canada there was nothing but herring and we talk about fish now days; I can remember leaving Erskine dock and the pollock was so thick all you could see was the backs of them all over everywhere you looked. And when I leave the harbor in my seine boat and go up through the narrows and in the sunshine I remember this one evening I looked up ahead and it was calm, but it looked like a breeze, but here was millions of fins right on the water shimmering. And I took one look over the side and it was solid pollock clean to Kukak, 70 miles away from here! That's how much pollock there was, but I seen it. A lot of people wouldn't believe it.

"I can remember — this is something you might not believe this either — I was on this here big seine boat with nine men aboard and they were all Slovenians from down in Puget Sound. They came up here to fish herring and they were taking barrels of fish in to a big bay on Shuyak Island for my parents and, when we got to the head of the bay, dead calm all these guys here talking in Russian or whatever it was; they were saying, "*Gospodi, look at the fish! Oi Gospodi!*" [*Russian: O Lord!*] You know the water looked like it was raining there ... as far as you could see it was fish jumping. As you looked back there was a blood stream behind the boat for as far as you could see. The props were grinding the fish up.

"My father's boat, it only had a small engine but we'd go in and out of the bay ... we couldn't ... we were over there to put up silver salmon, but we had to wait for all the pink salmon to go up the rivers so we'd be going back and forth and there was a bloody stream all [the way] back into our camp on the beach. So people talk about fish now days — to me it looks like there isn't any fish.

"You know back in the 20's and 30's Larsen Bay cannery had a big tug, enormous tug and a barge that held a hundred thousand salmon. They'd come up every day and make a trip from Larsen Bay in to the Buskin River and the fishermen of Kodiak would load it every day and when they were through it didn't look like there was a fish missing out of the river."

Looking at a photo of Rolf Christiansen and 3 other men.

Ed: "Well I met all those people years ago, went down there [Old Harbor] to fish and been around those people. There was a number of people there, I knew them pretty well. But there was this one guy that started the Christiansen family that guy there [pointing to the man on the left] was Rolf Christiansen, 'Old Man Rolf'. Is there a Christiansen here?"

Janelle & Loren: "Yeah."

Ed: "Come here I want to show you something. Here's your great grandfather of some of you kids down there in Old Harbor. That's Rolf Christiansen, my friend. This old man here, he came to Old Harbor and married an Old Harbor woman, I can't remember her name."

Janelle: "Is that Sr. or Jr.?"

Ed: "Oh well this is way Sr. This is about three, four generation ago. This man came to Old Harbor oh it had to be in the late twenties. And I want to donate this to the Christiansen family to whoever will accept it. I kept this here because he is my friend and I went one year cod fishing with him."

From that experience I learned quite a bit from what he told us. I learned how different the fishing was back in them days. It sounded like it was a lot more fun, but also



*Photo of Rolf Christiansen (left) and 3 other Russian fishermen.
Given to the Christiansen family by Ed Opheim Sr. during the interview.*

a lot more work. I think that everyone should get to listen or read what he has to say. He has a lot of good information to tell. I have learned so much just from that little bit of time that we spent with him.

Now just think if someone would go there and sit down with him and did a real interview with no time limit and was more specific about what they wanted to know about him and the old days. If I were a student that wanted to interview him, I would call him and very nicely ask him if I could interview him and make sure to point out that you are very serious about this and that you will listen to everything he has to say. I think that this would be worth his while if you were really serious about it. From the experience that I had with him, I think that he would be willing to do another interview.

-- Loren Petersen

A Story of Akhiok



The village of Akhiok

INTERVIEW:

*JR Amodo, Lucas Serjeant,
Jenna Downs, Michelle Johnson, and
Jennifer Myrick from the Alutiiq Museum*

STORY:

JR Amodo

PHOTO:

Eric Waltenbaugh

After a brief tour of the Alutiiq Museum, we were allowed to select the person we would interview. I chose Florence Pestrikoff. Sven Haakanson, Jr. told me she was from Akhiok and I thought it would be interesting to learn more about the village I am from. Florence, Jennifer Myrick from the Alutiiq Museum, myself and the other students gathered in a back room at the museum for the interview. Once we were all settled in the room, the students seemed ready and eager to listen and Florence appeared to be calm and relaxed.

Jr- When were you born?

Florence- (19) thirty-seven, nineteen thirty-seven.

Jr- And you grew up in Akhiok, right?

Florence- I was born in Akhiok, and lived there 'till I was fourteen years old. Then my dad moved us to Old Harbor.

Jr- How was the village of Akhiok? I mean what was the living like?

Florence- Well mostly subsistence. You know we ate clams, ducks...We didn't have any

deer... back then. We had, not the, not the, deer that you have now. We had reindeer that would migrate from, from Carmel [on the west side of the island, south of Karluk] like in the spring or toward the summer. And that's when my dad and the rest of the men... would... hike to the hills. And they had to hike quite a ways to follow the deer because mostly subsistence living, we didn't have any airplanes, believe it or not, until I was about... I'd say, maybe ten? It was mostly boats; we traveled by boat.

We received mail twice a month, weather permitting. The mail boat...in fact they were... it was... I'd say maybe, what? Not more than fifty feet. That's pretty small yet. It would travel around the island. Sometimes it would go from Kodiak... on the east side, go down to Akhiok and return on the west side, then it would start the next time on the west side to Akhiok. That's the only way we received our mail. Sound ancient, ah?

Jr- Yeah

Jennifer- What's been your most, interesting experience?

Florence- My most interesting? Growing up? Well we did a lot of outdoor playing. In the winter we had our indoor games. I think there was more, more family life, more community... Our lives were really centered around community. Today, it's so different. It, it started being different... after the nineteen sixty-four disaster, when T.V. came in. It, it just kind of made things so, different for us. It was a subsistence lifestyle we lived. We washed clothes with a washboard and, a washtub. We had no indoor plumbing. We carried water... so... I guess wasn't any; not many chances to get into mischief. We were too busy surviving. I think it was a good life style. I suppose even today you can make your own work, you know, work to better yourselves as high school students looking toward the future. It just depends on what your goals are in life.

Jr- Did they have a school back then when you were a, a kid?

Florence- mmhmm, Yeah there was a grade school. There was no, kindergarten. It started right off. Actually some kids even went to school when they were about five. It was different. A one room school house...taught from the first through the eighth. So the school teacher had a big job.

Jennifer- Wow, one, one teacher for the whole...school?

Florence- Yes one teacher for the whole school, yes.
But I remember the winters were so much colder, a lot colder. Where we get a lot of snow, we did a lot of ice skating, and sledding. We did a lot of that. And you know the hill behind the village, there?

Jr- mmhmm.

Florence- Yeah, yeah we climb that a lot. Do the kids still do that?

Jr- Yeah.

Jennifer- So, you say the grades was only up to eighth grade. Did you go away for high school or did you just pass?

Florence- Well, actually, one year there was no school in Akhiok. I don't know if the B.I.A.(Bureau of Indian Affairs) couldn't get a school teacher to come out or what. This was when I was in the seventh grade. So a few of us girls, in fact two, two of us girls went to Mount Edgecumb [a boarding school in Sitka], and we were only in the seventh grade. That was so sad. I cried the whole nine months. I wanted to go home. When I went back home that spring, I didn't go back [to Mt. Edgecumb], I was just so home sick. Then my dad moved us to Old Harbor. That's all. When I entered eighth grade... and I lived there for thirty years, raised my kids there, well most of them, most of my kids.



*Akhiok School, February, 2001
Photo: Duane Eluska*

Jennifer- When did you move to Kodiak?

Florence- Nineteen eighty-eight.

Jr- In Akhiok, during grade school, how many students were there?

Florence- I doubt if there was more than fifteen. It was a small, small school. Back then the, the boys especially... didn't... They hunted and fished or, or left school early in May. Like I said it was, we did a lot of subsistence. And my dad also took us trapping. This had to be before I was school age, and I remember that. We had our own cabin up in the narrows a little bit past Moser Bay. We had our own cabin but there was another family that lived in a barabara(An ancient Alutiiq home). I clearly remember that. My, my dad and, lives on the village, no not in the village, locally... trapped... hides... fox, land otter.

Jennifer- What did they do with the skins?

Florence- Sold them.

Jennifer- When?

Florence- There was some guy that came around or if nobody came to the village, the men would take a trip into Kodiak to sell their furs. I was too young to know how much they got for their furs, couldn't have been very much.

Jr- They used to hunt bears back then, too?

Florence- To eat. Ate lot of bear.

Jr- What kind of guns did they have back then?

Florence- I'm afraid you're asking the wrong person.

Jr- Oh. They did use rifles right?

Florence- Oh yeah. I remember them talking about a 30.06. Probably bear guns and shot guns or....we ate a lot of ptarmigan and ducks. We was on the beach to get our clams, and to Kempff Bay we get our oo dooks(spiny sea urchins) and oo goo duks (berries). I think they're still doing that today.

Jr- Yeah.

Florence- That's fun. This was a... I, I really think I had a really wonderful childhood. Good. Yeah my dad had a fish camp, in fact it's still in operation, in the Moser bay area.

Jenna- What kind of games did you play in winter?

Florence- The adults played the "ugh chaq" (spear) game, the dart game, with the "mung aghk." That's...

Lucas- Was it with the whale?

Florence- Yes, yeah with the porpoise. They call it a porpoise, maybe it's a whale. Same thing. That, that was a, that was a, popular game - Real popular.

Jr- During Alutiiq Week that, that still is popular. Yeah, whenever we have our Alutiiq Week, we still play that.

Florence- Yeah, my dad used play that for Alutiiq Week. He enjoyed doing things like that.

Jr- What kind of games did they, the children play and stuff?

Florence- Well, um, we, we played a game, some kids would go under a blanket, and we had to guess who that was, you know, who's head it was. Yeah, and we would say in Alutiiq, we'd say, "oo sook-oo sook mama suk ghia hiagn," We'd say the name, you know, "oo sook oo sook." Say the name and, say ah, "mama suk ghia hiagn." Then if we guess

that person right, they'd come out. They were saying... What's your name?

Jr- Jr.

Florence- Jr? "Jr mama wants you to come have tea." Just little games like that. And we also played, "ung-lung-lung-lung-lung," "who, who could you make laugh." Yeah. You know you can stare at the person or make faces. Simple games like that. At, at the school house we would have game night, Friday night was the game night and the school teacher would, would think of games for us to play. We just had a lot of fun.

Jennifer- What language did you learn first?

Florence- English.

Jennifer- English?

Florence- Yup, By then, by the time I was going to, started school, we weren't allowed to speak Alutiiq.

Lucas- Would the teacher get mad at you, for speaking...

Florence- Not me, my mom and dad. By the time I was born it was no longer, spoken.

Lucas- Why would they get mad at them?

Florence- Because they wanted them to learn English. They [wanted us to speak] in English and not in our own language. That was cruel.

Jennifer- So, did your parents remember Alutiiq, and teach it to you, is that how you learned?

Florence- Well they didn't teach it to me, but I was there when they were speaking it. I can start, remember real well. Now Old Harbor was different. The, the kids... By the time my mom and dad moved us over to Old Harbor, the little ones were speaking, Alutiiq. And I, I spoke enough to be understood.

Jennifer- Why do you think it was different in Old Harbor?

Florence- What was different?

Jennifer- That they spoke Alutiiq and, and not in Akhiok?

Florence- Well I suppose that the parents spoke to the little ones. Some of the families, not



Florence Pestrikoff
Photo courtesy of the Alutiiq Museum

all of the families, most of the families would.

Jr- Did you guys used to play Aleut Ball?

Florence- Oh, yeah.

Jr- During Easter time?

Florence- Yes, April seventh was when we... we would start that, play ball. We called it Play Ball. "My ak chk," My ak chk, means ball. Right after church on April seventh, we would play for that one day only. Right after church we would get our balls out and play that game. April eighth we didn't play until Easter Sunday. Do they still practice that?

Jr- Yeah.

Florence- The adults would play with us, which made it fun.

Jr- We made it a, we made it permanent tradition to do that every seventh of April and Easter Sunday.

Florence- We played the whole time until we went to the canneries when our fathers would go for spring work. During Lent there was no playing ball. We weren't allowed to chew gum! Which I think was pretty good. It taught, it taught us some discipline. You know? I kind of miss those ways. I do. We weren't allowed to eat certain, certain foods. I think it taught us something.



Florence Pestrikoff
Photo courtesy of the Alutiiq Museum

Jennifer- Do people still do that?

Jr- Yeah, my mom still does it.

Florence- Don't eat any butter?

Jr- Yup.

Florence- And meat?

Jr- Yeah.

Florence- Only fish?

Jr- Yeah.

Florence- During Lent.

Jr- Fish, clams and...

Florence- Yeah, no red meat?

Jr- Yeah.

Lucas- What religion are you?

Florence- Right now I, I'm nondenominational.

Lucas- That's???

Florence- That's Christian.

Jr- Did all the elders and adults pass through the forty days of Lent?

Florence- mmhmm, And once there's one person who didn't. He just couldn't make it through the Lent. And, and he was disciplined... in church. He had to kneel... This sounds cruel, but I don't know if it worked or not. They had these sand boxes, big sand boxes. They, they'd kneel through the whole church service... Ouch. Yeah almost all the people, except this one guy... Not almost all but, all the people except this one person just could not make it through the forty days, or seven weeks. Seven weeks of lent.

Jr- What sort of stuff did they teach you during grade school?

Florence- Reading, writing, arithmetic and geography. And some history. And that is all.

Lucas- Throughout the whole year?

Florence- All year.

Jennifer- No art?

Florence- Oh yes art. There was art. I guess I don't remember it very well cause I, I can't do art at all. And yes we did have sewing. The girls or who ever was interested in... sewing. Home Ec. I guess you call it.

Jenna- Did you do, like U.S. History?

Florence- Yes.

Jenna- Would you like to do; learn more about your history, rather than U.S. History?

Florence- You're asking me if I wanted to learn?

Jenna- Yeah if you would like to have done your history instead of U.S. History.

Florence- Actually, we were so isolated, we were very isolated from the outside world. So, we really... I guess in those days we just kind of took whatever was offered to us. We didn't,

we didn't ask any questions. Yeah.

Jennifer- Did you know your history from your parents?

Florence- My own history? Just by word of mouth. Yeah, what happened a long time ago.

Jr- Did elders used to go whaling back then too?

Florence- No.

Jr- No?

Florence- That was before I was born. I think my dad was the last one that was in the kayak.

Jennifer- Instead of, instead of what?

Florence- Instead of?

Jennifer- A fishing boat?

Florence- No, I think he was the last person that rode a kayak made by a native person.

Lucas- Rode?

Florence and Jr- Rode!

Florence- Rode, yeah. Traveled on.

Jennifer- Where'd they go? In a kayak?

Florence- Well, from what I hear they go all over the island, and on, over on to the main land.

Jennifer- But you never...

Florence- I never experienced it. I've never even been in one. We didn't have one by the time I was born. Now they're coming back ah?

Jr- Yeah.

Florence- They say that history repeats itself, so. There anything else that interests you? Why you kids do read a lot about the history of Kodiak Island now don't you?

Students- mmmm, Yeah.

Florence- That's really, really important to know. That's good.

Jr- Did you guys use, or used to walk over to Karluk to just go dancing and stuff?

Florence- My dad did that. I remember him, maybe it was one of the last times he did hike over there. Yeah he brought me a gift, from the store.

Jennifer- It's a long...

Florence- It is.

Jr- I, I recall my gram and them talking about them going over to, walking over to Karluk from Akhiok. They said if you fly, they said you could barely see the trail still going over to Karluk.

Florence- still there?

Jr- Yup. I always ask them, "What you guys always go over there for?" "To dance, to visit." I'd say, "How long it take for you to go over there?" "About twelve hours" to walk over.

Florence- Yeah, I remember people portaging, walking from Kaguyak to across, across Akhiok. They'd build a fire on that side of the lagoon so people from Akhiok would go over on the skiffs to get them. Pretty neat. These people did a lot of walking.

Jr- What kind of outboards did they have back then?

Florence- The old ten-horse Johnson.

Jr- And wooden skiffs, too?

Florence- Wooden skiffs.

Jr- How long were each of them skiffs?

Florence- Well, feet I don't know. I think from over there to about here.(six to ten feet long)

Jr- So, they were tiny?

Florence- Yeah.

Jr- Tiny boats, right?

Florence- Got us where we wanted to go.

Jr- Yeah. Was Alitak cannery built back then too?

Florence- As far as I could remember it's always been there in my lifetime. And Moser Bay was in operation, too.

Jr- Oh. And Olga Bay cannery?

Florence- No. No my dad used to pack bear for Bill Pinell. He'd go up there in the spring. So school, I guess was kind of flexible for us back then. Depending on what our fathers were doing.

Jennifer- What did people do after, after eighth grade? Did they go to Mount Edgecumb or come to Kodiak or what?

Florence- Ones that wanted to go to Mount Edgecumb went.

Jennifer- But they couldn't come to Kodiak unless they had friends...

Florence- That would take them in? No, it was either Mount Edgecumb or Chemawa [in Oregon]. Yeah I have a, a sis... She was, this girl was adopted by my mom and dad. She graduated from Chemawa high school. I didn't graduate from any high school, I, I took my G.E.D. Don't do that though.

Jennifer- So, how much school did you go to?

Florence- Through the eighth grade.

Jennifer- Through the eighth grade? And did you do extra studying to pass your G.E.D.?

Florence- Yeah. Yeah I did. I married at seventeen. So I was busy raising a family. Work at the post office for over twenty years. So, I know something.

Jr- Are you proud today of what you did back then?

Florence- What I accomplished?

Jr- Yeah.

Florence- Yeah. I am. I really am. Yeah, both my mom and dad are gone now. Died. My dad was a really wonderful role model. I'm only sorry I didn't learn how to weave baskets from my mom, so there are a few little regrets here and there. Basket weaving is one of them.

Jennifer- Aren't there classes?

Florence- Yeah, there... Sven said he'd call me when there's....when there will be a class.

Jennifer- Have you taught your children any of the things that you learned when you were little?

Florence- My youngest, yeah.

Jennifer- Youngest?

Florence- Yeah. She knows some of the Alutiiq language, some phrases. I think I'm the most proud of that, my language 'cause they are some words that you just can't quite grasp in the English language. Yeah the English... I, I feel like the English language is so complicated you have, you use the same word for different meaning. Alutiiq is not like that.

“I think I’m the most proud of that, my language ‘cause there are some words that you just can’t quite grasp in the English language.”

Jr- Could you tell us a story in Alutiiq?

Florence- You wouldn't understand it.

Jr- Just to like, the people were let ah, showing the tape to, just to see how it sounds.

Florence- Oh. I see what you mean. Ok. I'll count for you. Ok, "us ee luq" (1) "mul uq" (2) "pe ngi oong" (3) "sta man" (4) "ta hl ee man" (5) "uk hwill hun" (6) "mak hlu- gnung" (7) ah, "mak hlu gnung", "un glan hun" (8) "kung lui hun" (9) "cu lin" (10)

Jr- That's cool... like some phrases, but I still never could memorize them 'cause some of them were long and hard to pronounce but, they're like, got like the basics down, like, "mom, I love you," and fork, spoon, writing utensils, pencils, paper.

Florence- mmmm, Yeah if, if you want to say, "I love you", to somebody, just say, "kung lu gum gan," "ku nu gum gan." Now, if you want to say I love you lots, "ku nu gum gan a mus com uk." I love you lots.

Jennifer- So you did, you did a book, right? A language lessons book?

Florence- Yeah. Should be around here somewhere, I guess. Did you ever see ah, Jeff Leer's

dictionary?

Jr- Ah, no.

Jennifer- Did he work with you to do that?

Florence- No. It was with my mom and dad and, and um, Nina Zeedar, Jenny and Senaphont Zeedar. A lot of those older people.

Jennifer- The books that, that she's talking about is a dictionary for the Alutiiq language. Pretty, pretty in depth dictionary, too.

Florence- mmmm, As long as you have the stem word. And try...

Florence specifically said that they lived primarily a subsistence lifestyle and that living has changed drastically over the years. She is thrilled at how the tradition is slowly coming back. It has only been recently that the generation of today is wanting and willing to learn of the traditions and language of the Alutiiq people. With the intervention of our elders, the Alutiiq language is being taught to the youth of our generation. One of the definite changes is the transportation and all the modern things we have today. I have a faint idea of what the living was like back then from the stories that were told and experiencing power outages from about a day up to weeks at a time, depending on the weather. If the weather is bad, the mechanic would be unable to make it down here to Akhiok. So, we got the feel of what life was like before the convenience of electricity.

Written up by,
Jr. Amodo

It's all about thinking logically



Iver Malutin shares his stories as Jacquie Seeger listens, records, and takes notes.

INTERVIEW: *Sean Brester, Crystal Bartelson,
Ivan Christiansen, Jacquie Seeger*

STORY: *Jacquie Seeger*

PHOTO: *Teri Schneider*

This interview was conducted at the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak. The people that performed this interview were Crystal Bartelson, Ivan Christensen, Sean Brester, and Jacquie Seeger. We asked Iver Malutin one question about where he grew up and he just went on from there to tell us some of the most important details of his life.

Iver Malutin was born in 1931 in Kodiak. His father was the choir reader and director of the Russian Orthodox Church at the time. His family lived in the building right next to the church; most of his brothers and sisters were born there. These are his stories.

"We were never bored. We never even used the word. The reason was there was always so much to do. There was 300 to 500 people in Kodiak at the time and most of those people were Scandinavians and Russians. My friends and I would go down to the boat harbor and watch the halibut boats come in because there were so many back then. We would play games like run chief run, and we would take a ball and throw it over the roof of a house. There would be three or four people on each side and when the kids on one side

got the ball they would try to run over to the other side and tag someone from the other team. We played lots of games and we played together.

"During the war, we lived really close to the church, right by the docks and the tanks would be set up right there. So, the people who lived in those houses by the dock had to evacuate sometimes. It didn't matter morning, noon, or night we maybe had to evacuate our homes. We always had our gas masks with us too, just in case they decided to bomb the tanks. Well, you know that is the reason we had to run to the hills anyway because the Japanese were really close, that they might bomb the tanks. Anyway, people from the show house would have to leave in the middle of the show to run for the hills. Another thing that happened during that time was at night we had to keep shutters over our windows, not a crack of light could shine through. The federal government said if they found the light shining through we would get fined fifty dollars. Of course I never heard of anyone getting fined, so everyone must have listened to the federal government.

"The Scandinavians there had an influence on the people down here, you know. Like I was watching a basketball game the other day. It was against Sand Point and Noorvik, and I looked at those Sand Point kids and they are all white kids, and those Noorvik kids were all from up North and looked like they were suppose to, like Eskimos. I am not saying one is better than the other it's just that the Scandinavian influence is so much greater down here than up there. It's just like Port Lions, all the Scandinavian influence you got the Nelsons and Gundersens. Then there is the Russian influence the Pestrikoffs and Petersons, you know Oscar Peterson is Russian, a lot of Russian and Scandinavian Influence there in Port Lions, Afognak, and Ouzinkie. There is some in Old Harbor, but percentage wise it's the other three villages, and there is some in every village they pick up a name and before you know it a lot of the village is related. Port Hogan brought in a whole bunch of Scandinavians, with the whaling. Again I am not saying one is better than the other, cause all the people on the island are really good people. It doesn't matter where they came from.

"But I do know one thing, before the Land Claims [Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 1971] came all the people on Kodiak were white man, they weren't Native I know, nobody wanted to be Native they wanted to be a Swed or Norwegian, I don't know why. You know who you should talk to in Port Lions is Oscar Peterson, and Johnny Pestrikoff, both have good information, and Reggie Gundersen he knows a lot too. Yeah, good people in that Port Lions, I have known them all my life.

"Now, I am going to tell you something about Iver Malutin. Now this is really rare, but you have to believe me. My



Iver Malutin observes the boat harbor.

mother and dad, my mother never drank and my dad drank a few times a year not much as he did before, and when I was very young I made up my mind that I would never drink and I would never smoke, and to this day I never have had any alcohol or tobacco. All you have to do is make up your mind really young and you also gotta have a lot of respect for your parents, and I think that is the biggest player for the reason I never drank or smoked. I saved a lot of money doing that too, so I think it still can be done.

"Well, let me tell you something about the earthquake, although I could talk all night about that. Well, you know the channel out here? Well the tide was running so strong that the buoy went under the water. The anchor would catch and it would blink under the water. We were watching it that night at about 2:30. Then the tide would change and come the other way at about fifteen or twenty miles per hour. That's how fast the tide was coming in that night, put that blinking buoy right under the water.

"Some people saw the wave coming in at forty to fifty feet high on Long Island. I don't know if you heard the story of Johnny Larsen who had the Spruce Cape, you probably heard of him. Well, what happened was they were all tied up down here to deliver crab. Harry Knagin had the KFC, Johnny Larsen had the Spruce Cape, and, George Nomaff had the Alliade Inn. They were tied up right down here at Standard Oil and I seen them there all day and I thought they were going to leave but they never did and then they must have gone off by Spruce Cape. For some reason George Nomaff went around the swing buoy where the big boats go out in the deep water, and Johnny Larsen went the way we always go through the rocks there and then he got caught in the rocks. So then as Heddi Panimarioff was talking to his wife Ada on the radio, he told her there was a big wave coming and it went right through the hull of the boat, the bow. Then he told her that he would never see her again, and to give all the kids a kiss. That was the last transmission made and the end of the Spruce Cape. Anyway, George, the one who went the other way got to Afognak. Then Harry Knagin went from Ouzinkie to Afognak in the back bay in only a half an hour, the tide was pushing his boat so hard that a normal hour long trip only took a half an hour.

"Then it was before the earthquake, or no it must have been after because I went down to the boat harbor with my brother to check on his boat. The tide has risen so high that it had made the caps on the pilings fall off. Anyway, as my brother was checking on his boat the tide kept coming in. I happened to look at one of the pilings and the water was coming in so fast I told him we need to go or we aren't going to make it. We were at the end of the dock there so we ran out of there. Then when we got off the dock the water was coming over the top of the dock and so by the time we got in the car the water has risen all the way up to the tires of the car. The water came up another eight or ten feet after that.

"One thing about the Aleut way of life is they didn't have anything done for them. They did it all themselves, all by hand. Now here's a good story, it comes from Derevnia's Daughters, by Lola Harvey, it's at the library. Anyway it's about Herman Von Scheele's family on Afognak, and they had a store there as well. There was quite a few Von Scheele's. Well anyway, you know old man Herman would go up to Malina Beach to get dried fish from the Native people, and all the Native people would go to Malina Beach. Now listen to this if this is not common sense. What could you really take with you in a small row boat from here to Raspberry Straights and stay for three to four months? There is not much you could take in that little boat. Okay, so what they did was row up there with very little supplies and what they would do was take the boat and turn it over for a shelter. They would board up the bottom and lay grass in there for insulation and warmth. Man, that's

a good idea because it protected them from wind and rain and everything else. Then, since they didn't have a stove they would dig a hole in there and put logs in there to start a fire then when the sand got hot enough they took the coals out. Then they took the bread or fish or what ever and wrapped them in leaves, laid it on the hot sand and buried it. It works, my mother told me it works, and I even tried it. If they wanted to use a stove to boil water or fry a steak they would put a flat rock on those hot coals and wait till the rock got really hot, then fry your steak on it and it works too.

"You know the interesting thing about me and my life, you know the way I look at my life is if you look outside at a spruce tree and you look at one that is guesstimate at 67 years old and take another one that's the same age as you 14, 15, 16 or what ever you are. Then you look at the one that's the same age as you, and you look at this big tree that's the same age as your grandparent. Look at the difference of it in area and that's the way I

"One thing about the Aleut way of life is they didn't have anything done for them. They did it all themselves, all by hand."

always talk about the difference of people in an area. If they been here all their life they got roots in the ground just like that big tree, they will never move. If they are just young people and just got there they could pull 'em out and move you because you haven't got your roots in the ground. One more thing I would like to tell you is that the Russians and the Aleuts strived only on common sense without common sense they couldn't do anything, and when I look at the paper and see where the boat went down there in the Bering Sea, it was all a lack of common sense, I don't care what they say. A big boat like that couldn't be found, it's just a lack of common sense, somebody missed the boat by not using common sense."

The interview with Iver Malutin was very enlightening, some of the things he said made me realize that life is only what you make of it. It made me see that the people that lived back then survived by thinking logically. They used only what they needed and gave back to the environment in ways that could never be taken away. The elders all really do have a special story to tell and if a person were to just give them the chance to talk, and have some one actually listen, it can be an experience that would live with you forever.

SUSAN MALUTIN:



On Reproducing a Traditional Alutiiq Parka.

INTERVIEW: Katherine Berns, Josephine Lind

STORY: Josephine Lind

PHOTO: Eric Waltenbaugh

The 'Looking Both Ways' exhibit is a program that the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. put together for the people on Kodiak Island to learn more about their heritage and about their ancestors from years ago. One piece of the exhibit, that is going to be held at The Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, is the parka that Susan Malutin and Grace Harret did.

Katherine Berns and I were able to catch a glimpse of this fine piece and we also learned from Susan how long it took to complete the parka and how they came about being able to do the parka for the 'Looking Both Ways' exhibit. She also told us how her and Grace Harret found all of the furs that they needed for the parka. One person she said was a woman from up north was kind enough to sell some of her furs to them and had her son who was a fur tanner that lived right next door to her. So she had them shipped to them after they were completed. So that is what was exciting for me to get to see that parka before they start the exhibit. And I also loved and enjoyed interviewing Susan Malutin and I hope I have the chance to do it again sometime so I can get to know her more and learn a little more about native arts and crafts.

Josephine: "When did you first learn how to sew skins?"

Susan: "Actually it was probably twenty years ago when I began practicing and sewing by hand and trying to learn the stitches that were done on fur clothing and skin clothing and so it was well about twenty some years that I've been doing it."

"Grace and I were the first Native people to handle it in over 100 years."

Katherine: "Where did you grow up?"

Susan: "I grew up here in Kodiak, I was born here, my husband was born on Afognak, and our two children were born here also, so we're pretty much a Kodiak family and my folks are from here and from the Aleutian Chain, and then also and my great grandparents were from Afognak as well. So probably one of the things that I had hoped that you would want to know about is that parka that is in there, that's one that another gal, Grace Harret, and I created for this 'Looking Both Ways' project that is coming and we were approached in 1996, by Aron Crowell and Rick Knecht. Rick used to be here before the museum was built, and Aron is the co-author of Crossroads of Continents, a book that's out. Sometimes you see different articles in there and they were thinking apparently about the project about this exhibit, and this exhibit is stored in the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. and many of the items were taken from the Kodiak area or the Alutiiq region which included Kodiak, Nushagak, and Bristol Bay area, the Kenai area; that all used to be one area. And so they apparently had this parka in mind, but the parka was so fragile that it could not travel. They wouldn't allow it to travel, or felt it best they didn't because it would get damaged more. So they asked me if I would be interested in making a copy of that. So I thought that would be quite a project so I had asked them if

I could include my friend Grace Harret who is Cu'pik. She is from Mekoryuk which is in Nunivak way up North. So they agreed and then they decided to send us to Washington D.C. to the Smithsonian to take a look at the real parka. So we went and did that, and we took pictures. We measured it, we took photographs. We measured it again and one of the nice things is that Grace and I were the first Native people to handle it in over 100 years.

“They have it in a big drawer, you know like what a map drawer looks like, thin. Well they had it in that and they pulled it out and it was, they had taken very good care of it, but here it opened up. Here it was just an awesome feeling to know that we were the first Natives to handle that in all the years because the gentleman who collected it, William Fisher, he was an oceanographer here. He measured the tides and all those kinds of things when he was here and he was commissioned by the Smithsonian to purchase different items and this happened to be one that he purchased. Many of the things he did purchase were brand new. [they were] made just for him, but this one was a well used one.

So that's what made it real, [it was] more fragile than something else, and so they let us take it out and put it on the table and do all the things we needed to do and then when we were finished with it then we'd put it back on this table and they let us wheel it back to the place where it was stored. So you know we really have to be grateful that they took these things, otherwise this exhibit that's coming many of us will never see those things in our lifetime cause they're not here anymore they're not here, they're not made.



Parka Detail

“I think people will be amazed when they see the items that were made here for just daily clothing.”



*Susan Shows Josephine and Katherine pictures of her work.
Photo: Teri Schneider*

"The Russians were so adamant about not allowing the Natives to sew different kinds of items also sea otter, or bear so over time they quit making these kinds of things, but I think everyone will be amazed when they see the items that were made here for just daily clothing. You're just so amazed again it's the only word I can think of when you see these items. In these drawers they have its not in the Smithsonian in Washington we go to Maryland and there's huge concrete building that you have to go to through security and they have rooms of thousands of artifacts that are not on display because they really have no place for these native things. So that's how we got involved in the parka.

"So after we got back it took two years to acquire the funding to buy the furs for making the parka. We found some squirrel hides up in Shishmaref. There was an elder lady there who had some and she was kind enough to sell them to us. So we took those, and her son has a tannery there so he was right next door so she had them tanned and sent them to us. Then we started processing them and taking them all by hand, and oiling them and rubbing and rubbing and hours of rubbing to get them soft.

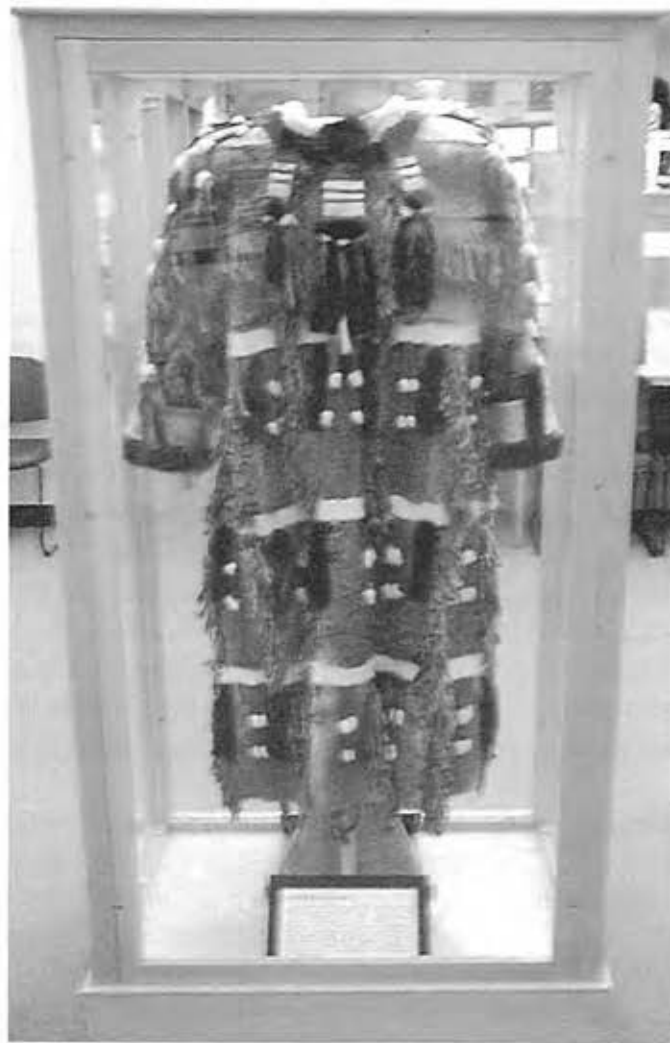
"In that parka there are 48 squirrel hides, full hides. When you go back in there and look at it you will see some of the squares. Then some of the tails that were left on there and then it has caribou. It has sea otter. It has ermine. It has caribou on it. You'll see the trim and you'll see the red wool, and you can tell it was a Russian influence because prior to the Russians the native people didn't use that kind of material. They just used furs. So you'll notice those things and this parka is just a man's hunting parka. An everyday parka, that's what they wore for hunting. Just like we would use raingear or you know, snow parkas. That's what they wore, but you could see that she took as good of care in sewing that everyday parka as she would a ceremonial parka.

"One thing that I did learn about her or the group of people, the group of women [that made

the parka], is that they must have saved a lot of pieces cause you wouldn't think it looking at it, but it is made out of a lot of little pieces; pieces of caribou, ermine, and mink. Maybe we can go in there and I will show you all of the different pieces.

"So finally it took us 18 months. At first it was Grace and I working on it and they had a photographer there each night that we worked on it recording everything. As time went on, we had other women come and young girls. They came and practiced sewing. So there were a lot of hands that made that parka eventually, just like originally."

I think this interview was important to me because, I think that it wouldn't be fair to not interview someone like Susan Malutin who has a lot of knowledge to share with anyone who is willing to listen and learn about how our ancestors or elders lived before we probably were born. She also can teach our generation how to sew skins and what the clothes and stuff were used for on a daily basis such as hunting, fishing, and all that other stuff that they used to use it for. I also learned not to be scared to interview my elders, because they are the ones who can tell us great stories of their past and how they used to live.



*Back of the parka on display at the Alutiiq Museum
Photo: Eric Waltenbaugh*

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