

1 **TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO DISC**

2 Oral History Tapes with Seldovia Village Tribe

3 ERIC NORDENSON

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9 INTERVIEWER: And now we have Eric Nordenson here
10 and we're going to interview him on his subsistence activities, so, Eric,
11 we'll start off with: Would you describe your household, those who
12 harvested resources with you and those you shared resources with?

13 ERIC NORDENSON: I was born here in 1944, in
14 Seldovia, and I was raised to a subsistence lifestyle, we've always gone
15 and taken what we needed and used it and shared it. And there are
16 times even now when we're out and we catch too much we got a little
17 set plan that we never freeze any of the winter kings when we catch
18 them and we make sure everybody we can give a feast to, if we've got
19 enough, gets fresh fish. That's one of our favorite things.

20 The same with halibut pretty much.

21 We just did that today.

22 INTERVIEWER: Your whole household, your
23 subsistence hunting---

24 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, I'm talking about my mother
25 and father and sister and brother.

26 But now it's just my wife and I. But we still live the
27 same way, clams, hunting, all the same, and berries.

28 INTERVIEWER: Okay, what animals, fish and plants
29 were the most important to your subsistence in the past? Like you can
30 go off and name off all the animals that, you know, the wildlife?

31 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, number one is moose, always
32 has been in my life. Deer would be secondary. Bear not very much.
33 Some bear. Ducks are in that, lots of ducks, still my favorite thing in the
34 world is to hunt ducks.

35 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I guess that's one of the things
36 that they should have named in here, put in here, is fowl, but that's
37 okay, I guess we could count them as animals.

38 ERIC NORDENSON: Yeah, ducks come under the
39 federal laws anyway, always have.

40 INTERVIEWER: Okay, and how about the fish, what
41 type of fish is important?

42 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, everything that we have
43 around here, all the salmon, very important. Halibut, Ling cod if we can
44 go far enough to catch them.

45 Is crab in there?

46 INTERVIEWER: No, but you could name it.

47 ERIC NORDENSON: Crab, King crab and Tanner crab
48 and Dungeness crab is very important. Although we're very restricted
49 on how we can go out and harvest them anymore. Tanner crab we're
50 allowed certain months of the year and we go catch all we can. And
51 those get shared with everybody too if we have plenty.

52 INTERVIEWER: Okay, is there any plants that you
53 gather to use for medicinal purposes or to eat?

54 ERIC NORDENSON: No, I'd have to think about that
55 one.

56 INTERVIEWER: I can help you if you want.

57 ERIC NORDENSON: Yes, you can help me if you can
58 name some, but I know there's a lot, but that's not something I go for.

59 INTERVIEWER: Do you ever use goose tongues, goose
60 tongues and patushkies?

61 ERIC NORDENSON: Yes, but not medicinal, to eat. To
62 eat. Mushrooms, wild mushrooms, that's one of my favorite things to
63 go do that. There's a lot of them around here, people won't touch
64 them because they're afraid of them, but I know just about every one
65 that's good.

66 And of course berries, eat all the berries we get.

67 INTERVIEWER: Okay, please your season-round
68 subsistence activities, where did you go to harvest, who usually went
69 with you?

70 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, every year lately since it's
71 just my wife and I is we go moose hunting, mostly up in Ninilchik area,
72 on Oil Well Road, that's one of our favorite spots to moose hunt.

73 We do our personal use, fishing on the beaches of
74 Kasilof every June, and the last—I think—five years, my favorite
75 vacation of the year to go up there and do that.

76 We can't subsistence fish here because we do the first
77 ones up there, we got the separation there, I would much rather go up
78 there so you can get away from town for a little while. But I appreciate
79 the subsistence here in our area which is already open.

80 INTERVIEWER: Okay, please describe a hunt or fishing
81 trip or berry picking, is there a specific hunting trip or a fishing trip that
82 you'd like to tell us about?

83 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, all my life! Every hunting
84 trip, and I do it every year, is the most fun, that's my vacation, I'd rather
85 hunt than do anything.

86 And my wife's the same way.

87 INTERVIEWER: And like everyone else you probably
88 have to go quite a ways away from here to go hunt?

89 ERIC NORDENSON: We do, there's no moose here and
90 there's no deer here. There's moose that are showing up, but I'm
91 hoping everybody won't kill them because of that fact, just let them try
92 to grow, the Fish and Game, if we could ever get them to introduce
93 deer here we'd be fine. And they've always argued against us, we've
94 even offered to take boats over there to get the deer if they would dart
95 them and we could bring them back here. I think they'd live fine here.

96 But moose hunting and duck hunting, I've been doing
97 that since I could shoot a gun, probably eight years old.

98 INTERVIEWER: Okay, how was the meat processing
99 preserved, when you got your moose, how was the meat preserved?

100 ERIC NORDENSON: Moose meat, from back then in
101 the Forties and Fifties and growing up with my family is always you do it
102 yourself, and then, you know, you would freeze it, you never—we
103 never dried moose meat or anything like that, or freeze it, just cut it
104 and eat it.

105 Fish, of course I could talk all day about how to do fish.
106 But I'm not giving Lillian my secrets.

107 (Laughter.)

108 INTERVIEWER: You know I already know the secrets.
109 How were fish processed and preserved?

110 ERIC NORDENSON: Salt.

111 Well, okay, fresh fish, you want to freeze it. The age-
112 old way is to salt fish, and it's good forever. And I do a lot of that. I'm a
113 little bit nervous if I have less than two five gallon buckets of everything
114 in my basement salted.

115 INTERVIEWER: Do you pickle your salmon?

116 ERIC NORDENSON: Yes. Yes, I do, I just pickled up five
117 gallons yesterday, to give away around here.

118 INTERVIEWER: And you also smoke fish, don't you?

119 ERIC NORDENSON: Yes, I smoke a lot of fish. And
120 that'll be next—in June, fresh reds for my personal use, which I kipper
121 and smoke just like you and Pete.

122 INTERVIEWER: We don't do so much kippering, the
123 type of kippering we do is smoking for two days and jar, that's not---

124 ERIC NORDENSON: Okay, that's what I'm talking
125 about, I do mine for seven hours and then I jar it.

126 INTERVIEWER: You know, sometimes people, you
127 know, the way they do kippered is they do in a Chief Smoke.

128 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, you can do that, but that's to
129 eat right now, that doesn't keep like stuff we do long term.

130 INTERVIEWER: How has subsistence fishing worked
131 around your commercial fishing?

132 When you went commercial fishing, did you---

133 ERIC NORDENSON: Well, when I used to commercial
134 fish, which was a lot of years, I did my subsistence when we weren't
135 working. It all boiled down to what time of year it was and what we
136 knew we could get. We all know what we could get at what time of
137 year here. You can always catch a halibut.

138 You could always, in the winter, find some herring.
139 And lately, the last ten—well, not ten years, close to it we've been
140 trolling for the King salmon out here, caught four today.

141 INTERVIEWER: Okay, do you use more or less wild
142 foods than you used to? I guess they say "Natural" foods—natural
143 resources.

144 ERIC NORDENSON: As much as I can get.

145 That is, you know, I would say probably less now
146 because it's not as easy to get what we're after now, there's lots of
147 rules and regulations and seasons and so forth because we got way
148 more people here now than we used to have. They made all the
149 regulations because the new people---

150 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, a lot more people are practicing
151 the subsistence---

152 ERIC NORDENSON: Yep, but we always have, it's just
153 hard for me to even call it subsistence, that's just how we grew up. It's
154 how we do it.

155 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that word, "Subsistence" is very
156 hard for me also.

157 ERIC NORDENSON: It is for me too, because it's just
158 something we did natural---

159 INTERVIEWER: We called it our way of life, sure.

160 ERIC NORDENSON: Yes, it's our way of life.

161 INTERVIEWER: Okay, what have been the major
162 factors affecting variations in your subsistence harvests?

163 ERIC NORDENSON: Rules and regulations. Because—
164 just like we were just talking about, we never—now we have certain
165 periods we can do it, like my personal use fishery will be from like June
166 15th through June 24th, that's how it's set up and that's the end of it,
167 and that includes everybody that's a resident of this state, but—and the
168 red salmon are just starting for the commercial salmon doing the
169 Kasilof River where we go, and I don't dip net, which is on the same—
170 personal use and dip netting are under the same permit. I don't dip
171 net, because I have more fun with the little gill nets and stuff, and living
172 on the beach, but rules and regulations probably have affected
173 everything more.

174 INTERVIEWER: But you haven't slowed down in any of
175 your harvesting?

176 ERIC NORDENSON: No, I still do everything.

177 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay, how has Seldovia changed
178 in your lifetime?

179 ERIC NORDENSON: That's awful. Seldovia was a really
180 neat town to grow up in. And we had seven canneries and a
181 boardwalk, and when you were a little kid you'd get slivers in your feet,
182 you know, my dad had a lot to do with starting this town off, way back
183 when, came from Sweden.

184 And my mother came from Wyoming and they met
185 here and they did a lot for this town I think, I feel that. They're well-
186 known and I couldn't imagine growing up in a better place.

187 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I remember that.

188 ERIC NORDENSON: Then I went away in 1963 to the
189 Navy. And the few times I came back to visit 'till I got out of the Navy,
190 it's just after the earthquake I couldn't believe what had happened to
191 the whole---

192 INTERVIEWER: It changed, yeah.

193 ERIC NORDENSON: I still live in the same house I grew
194 up in. I bought it back from my sister and brother, but Seldovia—I
195 could take forever to tell about it, I'm also on the city council where I'm
196 going into seven years on that just because I don't want all the new

197 people that are retiring here to take over and change everything for us,
198 it bothers us, the main reason I stay on is we need to get back to how
199 we used to be around here. And I don't know if we can ever do it.

200 INTERVIEWER: I don't either.

201 ERIC NORDENSON: Because it's here to stay.

202 INTERVIEWER: Okay, any comments on the youth in
203 the community, are they learning subsistence skills?

204 ERIC NORDENSON: I think so. It's very hard—it's very
205 hard to get young people to go fishing anymore. It's not like when we
206 grew up, that we had to. Now they're kinda, you know, asked to and if
207 they know if the prices are bad—they have been, salmon prices have
208 been down for a long time. I think if the opportunity—if the money
209 was there a little better and they were a little hungrier they would go.

210 I think there's some training programs that I've talked
211 with a few people around here for community development, quotas,
212 you know, and stuff, I think there's a lot that can happen and I know
213 you guys are pursuing some of that stuff and I hope it doesn't stop.

214 I think my main thing here is we lost the cannery in
215 1991, due to outside owners that didn't give a damn about Seldovia,
216 that's basically it, as far as I'm concerned. And my dream is to have a

217 cannery back with the city with F&A, get this grant this year hopefully
218 and get that grant and get this cannery property---

219 INTERVIEWER: I think we need to---

220 ERIC NORDENSON: ---my dream is to have a ferry
221 service here just for Kachemak Bay, to haul our product and to have a
222 cannery.

223 INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

224 ERIC NORDENSON: You know, anybody that tells me
225 it's not economically possible here is nuts, because Cordova is way
226 worse than we are as far as being off the road system and they've still
227 got five canneries or six and their fish is being shipped out by airplane
228 and barge every day. I work down there, I see it all the time.

229 INTERVIEWER: And you know when you're talking
230 about canneries I think a cannery has a lot of potential in the
231 community---

232 ERIC NORDENSON: Employment too.

233 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and as far as employment, it's
234 good for our resources in the bay.

235 ERIC NORDENSON: Of course it is.

236 INTERVIEWER: Look what we've lost since the
237 canneries closed down—closed down here.

238 ERIC NORDENSON: Yeah, the herring are hardly here
239 anymore, for one thing.

240 INTERVIEWER: Clams?

241 ERIC NORDENSON: Clams, well, that's sea otters,
242 they've had a lot to do with that, but—the cannery business—I worked
243 as a dock foreman there from 1985—from '85 to the oil spill year when
244 I went to work on the oil spill, '89, and in the summer during salmon
245 time we had over seventy people working down there.

246 And, there was so many people—so much demand for
247 labor that we had to get outside help, because there wasn't enough
248 people in Seldovia that would work.

249 INTERVIEWER: I think people, you know, that have
250 worked—have had experience working in the cannery miss it---

251 ERIC NORDENSON: Oh, I think so too.

252 INTERVIEWER: ---because it brings the community
253 close together.

254 ERIC NORDENSON: It does, it really does.

255 God, I can remember the old days when all the canners
256 were running the---

257 INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

258 ERIC NORDENSON: I know you had three people there
259 too.

260 INTERVIEWER: Uh, huh, yes.

261 ERIC NORDENSON: That was the days, the old days.

262 INTERVIEWER: Sometimes I think about it and miss it.

263 ERIC NORDENSON: That's how my dad came here is on
264 the sailing ships, picking up the herring and taking it to San Francisco in
265 the Twenties, he and Carl Winstead.

266 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay, that's it then on the
267 questions.

268 Thank you, Eric.

269 ERIC NORDENSON: Oh, yeah, thank you.

270 (End of disc.)

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