

Steven Jacobson on Central Yupik program and Irene Reed

AD: My name is Andreas Droulias and I am here with Steve Jacobson to discuss about the Central Yupik Program and Irene Reed.

SJ: Well, I came here in 1971 and I began working for the Eskimo language workshop few months later, 1972, February 1972, and my background. I didn't come as a Professor, I've never taken any courses in linguistics, hardly any in anthropology, I had a College degree and Masters Degree in Math, but I had spent a year in a Yupik village, as a (?) volunteer, do you remember that program?

AD: No

SJ: It's like the domestic Peace Core, and I accomplice very much, but I had a wonderful time, I went hunting and fishing and trapping, this is a village on the lower Yukon River...and I, of course, I wanted to learn the language, a lot of people spoke Yupik, and I...I couldn't learn it, there were no books, (?), an old book by a missionary, I couldn't follow, certainly it wasn't a teach yourself book, I tried to get people to teach me but they didn't know how to teach, I didn't know how to learn the language, I 'd taken languages in classrooms in College and High school but, it was different just trying to learn it in the field, and in the end I learned couple of dozen phrases like a parrot might learn them. And a few years later I was in Fairbanks looking for job, couldn't find one, and I heard that there was a really nice course in Yupik Eskimo taught at the University, so I went to see the teacher, was Irene Reed, and I said "Could I sit on your course for a few weeks till I find a job, and of course I'll have to quit", she said "Oh sure, as long as you want to". Well! Few weeks became a whole working life, because I didn't find a job and after a while the class became more important to me than any job. It was utterly fascinating to me. For one thing it was a

class of mixed Yupik speakers, Yupiks who didn't speak the language well and complete non speakers like myself, and somehow she managed to handle all groups and they all contributed to each other. She was a wonderful person and wonderful teacher, the whole spirit of the class made it interesting and exiting and to me it was just amazing that here was a subject taught in freshman class in College and there were no, really, no books, even as taking it as a 100 level class, I could ask questions that nobody could answer, I could ask "why do you say it this way, instead that way" and she said "well, I really don't know", and the Yupiks who were assisting her in teaching it "the Yupiks speakers would say "well because this way sound right, and that sounds wrong" but no one could explain why. And I'd ask "are there grammar books, are there dictionaries, are there articles?" because in the field of Math that I've been in, you had to be a very advanced graduate student before you could even pose a question that haven't been answered a dozen of times and...shake her head, "No nothing like that", I felt like exploring an new continent, it was amazing. And some months later, Irene offered me a job, part time at first, putting together a Yupik dictionary, and I jumped at it, I needed to work and this was just fascinating and at that time we were in the 3rd or...her outfit(?) was in the 3rd floor of the Eilson building, in a great big room, used to call the Eskimo Language Workshop and there weren't little campy(?) holes like this, it was just a big open room, with a lot of people working in it, Yupiks, non Yupiks,.....not Michael Krauss but Irene Reed, Pat Afgan(?) and Martha Tilaq(?) and Marine Mead(?), Marine Black(?) at the time, they were Yupik speakers, and then various other people who worked...largely they were putting together materials for the new Yupik language programs in the schools, so they were people writing books, people illustrating the books and there was even a fellow printing them and packaging and mailing them.

AD: What was the year of this?

SJ: About 1972, I guess. But Irene also had these people, Pat and Mary and Martha, transcribing tapes that had been recorded some years earlier and listening them onto a tape recorder and typing away, or writing them, translating them, finding unusual words and constructions and she had, herself had done a vast amount of work there, all kinds of notebooks and files with words in them and phrases and samples and I was supposed these together into a dictionary, that was my job, or the beginnings of a dictionary. And whenever, there had been Yupiks there, whenever Yupiks came to Fairbanks, Irene was the address they went to. She was a very hospitable person, very friendly, very easy going. Also the bilingual teachers for the schools that she had trained, it was the first bilingual program, she would have them...when they weren't doing anything, they've been, she'd give them books of pictures of birds and they'd be writing in the names (?), so that's what I had to work with. And it was an exciting program at that time, just incredibly exciting because this was the first time that anybody paid much attention to native languages in Alaska, Mike had been researching them for 10 years already and Irene had been working with him but...and there had been classes at the University little classes in Eskimo, I don't about Athabascan yet, but this was the first time they were being short of offered back to the people. Somehow they had convinced the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the state operated school system to try, in some of the schools to have the first few grades taught in the Yupik language...now it seems so obvious that...kids speak Yupik, you should teach them in Yupik and at that time that's....all the children did in, many of these villages, when they came to school, they couldn't speak a word of English. As Michael Krauss said that to try to teach kids in a language they didn't speak, was like trying to teach somebody to play a violin without riding

a bicycle. As you trying to teach them read and write using sounds that maybe weren't present in his language, you write RU(?) sound with an R, well they don't have a RU(?) sound in their language. So the idea was that you teach them in the language, not teach them the language, that they already knew, but teach them in the language of their home. And then, since it was viewed that, eventually, education would be in English, since that's the language of America that, eventually these skills would be transferred in English. So, since for example, Yupik has a RNA(?) sound, you've learned that that's written with an R letter, when you're writing Yupik and the a child learns the connection between the sounds and the spelling with the sound system in a language that he is familiar with, so he sees a picture of woman and would say *Agnac*(?) and that *RN* would be underlined wherever it was written, so they'd learn the connection. That way rather than seeing a picture of a river and saying it *river* and having the *R*(?) underlined because to them rive is *quik*(?) and they don't even have a *R* sound in their language. And then later on they could transfer and say well, in English, this language, this other language, the *R* stands for *RA* sound like in the word *river*, which is your *quik*(?). It was a splendid idea and it sort of amazed that it hadn't been done before because every many knew, and I had seen it in Marshall(?) that, that was the village that I'd been there for a year, the kids came to school and they were just bewildered and they would lack far behind children in a English speaking city. Another feature of that bilingual program was that the teachers, people often used to ask "Gosh if you have teachers teaching in Yupik, isn't it hard to train the teachers how to speak to Yupik?". Well yeah, would have been because the teachers were all white, non-natives at that time, but what they did was, they took local people and taught them how to be teachers, local people who spoke the native language, spoke Yupik and taught them how to be teachers. I guess it was considered far

easier to take a person from a village, who spoke Yupik and teach them how to teach children, than to take a certified teacher who didn't speak Yupik and teach them enough Yupik to teach in that language. So, they had gotten...chosen, Irene had chosen Yupik speakers from the villages and brought them to Fairbanks and they were taught how to teach children, how to read and write in this more accurate writing system than what they might had known before, the old missionary writing system were not very accurate and...books were being produced in that same place that I was working, some of those people, like Pat Afgan(?), was very creative in writing stories, other people wrote down traditional stories and other people translated like Little Red Riding Hood. Then they also writing science books and Math books and sending them off to the schools, this is very exciting time you know, it felt like we were doing something revolutionary that would finally change a pattern, where...which I had seen in the year I'd been in the village where the school had been a very alien institution, the teachers were kind of removed from the local population and the children when they went in they were really quiet and gradually and slowly and belatedly learned to speak English without(?) understand what was going on. This is all going to be different.

AD: Did you speak Yupik when you were in the village?

SJ: No, like I said, I wanted to learn, I wanted desperately to learn, though the village I was in had been an old mining camp so there was a lot of English spoken there too. I'd wanted desperately looked to learn but I hadn't been able to very well, and that's what had gotten me to take the class offered at the University from Irene. And the class taught the subject in a systematic way, and it amazes me to see any language taught so systematically, as much more systematically than any German or Russian taken before. And I could learn, whereas as

in the village I found that, I arranged for some man to teach me the language and he...I still remembered me very clearly he'd asked me "Where should I begin?", I said "Begin with the parts of the body", "Where, what parts?", "Start with the head and work your way down". So he started with the head and I was busy furiously writing things down but not really knowing how to write them cause I wasn't sure what the sounds were, writing them as best as I could and he started with the hair and the grey hair and the dandruff and the forehead and the eyebrows and the eyes lashes, by the time he got to the nose, I couldn't even remember the first part even though I had tried to write them down and obviously this was not the write way, I didn't need to know all those words and it wasn't gonna help me too much me but as he told me, he said "I don't know how to teach", I didn't know how to learn, so, but the class was very systematic.

AD: So, this first class was after the creation of Alaska Native Language Center....

SJ: Actually, it was before.

AD: Before, OK.

SJ: Bilingual education had just started the year before, half a dozen Yupik schools...

AD: '71 then.

SJ: Yeah, and the unit that was running it was not the Native Language Center but something called the Eskimo Language Workshop, later became the Yupik Language Center. And that's when Irene had it. **(12:51)**. Mike was down on the second floor, in his office, I hardly got to know him for quite a while after that because I worked with, Yupik Language Center, or Eskimo Language Workshop and he was still in Linguistics Department and he...by that time, had moved out from the Yupik language, which he'd been one of the first people to research that and he was dealing with all the other languages in Alaska, so they weren't my

interests, at least not then, so I sort of stayed out of that. I saw him occasionally, I remember his office was just full of books the beginnings of our library and archives over there.

Anyway, the work that I was involved in on the dictionary was very exciting and the bilingual program was exciting, we just had great hopes for it, we hoped that it would reverse, just reverse the shift of the language to English because you could see that really, that time the strongest language and still is, was Central Yupik, but there still half a dozen languages where children spoke them, but you could see that the trend had been that children would stop speaking a native language, then as they became adults, then nobody would be speaking or hardly anybody, and we thought what we were doing would reverse the trend in Yupik.

AD: Do you remember how many students in that class?

SJ: At that time the classes were huge, there were about 30 students first year class. It dropped every year.

AD: Both natives and non native?

SJ: Yeah, it was an interesting combination and it's been a tradition that continues to this day, was that we would have one class that would include three groups of people. Native students who spoke the language, and they were taking it for a variety of reasons (15:00), maybe curiosity, maybe because they thought it would be easy, often because they wanted to learn to read and write, in a new way or in any way, often because they wanted to extend their knowledge of the language or they wanted to take it in the same way that English speaker by want to take an English class so they were one end. The other end were non-natives who didn't know the language at all and wanted to take it, either out of curiosity cause they were in Alaska, or cause they had a relative, after a while I married one of my fellow students, who was a native speaker, so that gave me more inducement to want to learn

the language and then there was a group in between, which were largely natives who didn't speak the language very well and wanted to improved their speak...and somehow this was handled in one class. We really, they really couldn't break it into different groups, the class wasn't that big. It was the...the bilingual program was first Central Yupik but, it was clear that, and it was first restricted to areas where the language was quite strong, there were Central Yupik areas where it wasn't strong and at first was really scientific experiment on the part of the Bureau of Indians Affairs and the state schools, they had villages that had that and villages that had the traditional education and then they were going to see which ones did better. I don't know how that ever worked out, what they find out, but eventually even the places that didn't have it wanted it, the places that the languages had fallen away wanted something to try to revive it, and places beyond Central Yupik wanted something too, so eventually the program, the bilingual program was extended. I just think that still has had by far the most benefit in places where the children speak the languages because in other places it becomes, try to teach them the language and it is very hard to teach the language if the whole current of the community is going against. (TEST)

AD: Ok, we are back again.

SJ: She had come here about ten years before I did and barely her arrival in Fairbanks to the Native language field was not so different from my own. She had more background in linguistics and anthropology than I did, but she had come to visit her sister, who lived here, no intention of working and Michael Krauss had somehow sought her out, he had come here, as you probably know, as a French teacher and had become interested in these neglected and ignored native languages, and he sought her out because he'd heard that she had talents along this line. And she had worked with him, I believe she, one of her first jobs was typing all his

work on Eyak, which is, you should look at that, it's amazing. And she told me that it just took hours and hours to type at all(?) these funny symbols and all. And then she had worked with Osito Myoka(?), Japanese linguist, and Michael Krauss and Pat Afgan(?) and Martha Tilaq(?) on the first grammar book of Yupik, this was before there was any bilingual program, so...

AD: So how did Irene Reed was known to Michael Krauss?

SJ: I think he just heard that there was a woman in town who, this is a small town then, he just heard that there is a woman in town that had real talents and he just found her. He was very good at doing that, he'd hear about people wether...often about natives who would be in the area, who would have some kind of talent. Well, and so it was almost maybe eight years before they started that bilingual education, came up with a good writing system, train teachers, have them come here and set up Eskimo language workshop for producing materials and for the training of teachers...

AD: What kind of materials?

SJ: Books these little books. You've probably seen them (stands up and picks up a primer), lets see....here just to give you an example. Children's books.

AD: Right

SJ: Readers of fairly big print at different grey levels from a variety of sources, traditional sources, traditional short(?) stories, written for the occasion, translated from English, not all fiction, some on science, math.

AD: That's really interesting, remarkable actually.

SJ: They were all produced in that Yupik language center.

AD: So, they were produced within one year?

SJ: Yeah, well, they were produced over the years but they started producing them within a year. And they did other things too, Irene and Mike and the people that she worked with like Pat Afgan(?) and Martha Tilaq(?), in particular, they had a Journal in Yupik, literally journal all in Yupik, (?), which they published, I don't know how many subscribers it had, it lasted maybe half a dozen copies or numbers, they had that, they had, there was a fellow John Anayak(?), who was a Yupik, who was a student at the University in those early years, who had great singing ability and Eskimo language work shop (21:00) produced a long playing record of his songs which he wrote himself and performed in Yupik and it was all, all in Yupik and the, well it was half English the songs but the title or the album jacket was all in Yupik and we recently produced that as a CD. There where, yeah...

AD: So, all the students of the class were involved in this...

SJ: No, well often times students were involved, well there was the group in Yupik language workshop or Eskimo language workshop did the work but since so many of the students taking the class where really good speakers, Irene would often hire them for a greater or lesser part time to work. There is a girl Anuska Mt(?), from somewhere in Bristol Bay, who produced a very nice little film on Eskimo dolls stories, traditional doll stories, she played with the dolls and told the story. It was very fortunate that there were so many people, young people who could...college age people coming there, who would have abilities in the language. Ok, so that was the work of the Eskimo language workshop, now when I had worked there for 2 years, I guess it was 1974, by that time I was working full time, again still on the dictionary and grammar book and all that(?). The Eskimo language workshop, supporting the bilingual program moved to Bethel and Irene moved with it, and the purpose of the move was that that's the center of the Eskimo... Yupik speaking world so that's where

this work should be done, rather than having everything come to Fairbanks. I didn't move, I had reasons I wanted to stay in Fairbanks, everybody was very sorry to see Irene go, she's such a dynamic person and so imaginative and creative, but that was about a year after the state had legislated and funded and set up the Alaska Native Language Center, so my own work when the Eskimo language center...Eskimo language workshop moved to Bethel, most of the people who worked there moved with it. But I stayed and I moved to the Alaska Native Language Center and it was in a different building, then it was in Groening building. And I continued, I taught the classes that Irene had taught and worked on, continue working on the dictionary and on the grammar book, but now instead of being surrounded with people working on Yupik Eskimo, I was surrounded mostly with people working on other native languages and Michael just had a way of finding them, people who happened to be in Fairbanks and happened to have talent. There was Edna Macklein(?), maybe you've heard of her, she was my counterpart who taught Inupiaq classes then, extremely talented woman, who happened to be living in Fairbanks from Barrow, she had an advantage that I could never have, she grew up speaking this language, so she's...I had to go home and ask my wife all these questions constantly and Edna had it all in her head. And there was Veric Anashiro(?) from St. Lawrence Island, Siberian Yupik, who was here because her husband was in the army, stationed here, and there was Linda Pamton(?) from St. Lawrence Island, who was here because she's been married to a pilot who lived in Fairbanks, he'd died some years ago, and she was a school teacher, public school teacher, and I mentioned those in particular, there were also Athabascans and other groups, because when the Eskimo Language moved to Bethel my...a lot of the things, I've been working, were kinda taken from me. I was teaching classes here but I didn't have too much to do and Michael Krauss set

me to work on Siberian Yupik, St. Lawrence Island. So, that was totally new thing to me, of course it's related to Central Yupik in all kinds of fascinating ways. But that was the early years of the language program here.

AD: So, what is involved in the creation of a dictionary then?

SJ: Well, I don't know if I'm...suppose there's all different kind of ways to go about it. For me when I was working on the Central Yupik dictionary, first of all I had all kinds of written stuff that Irene Reed had collected, maybe Michael too, maybe Osito(?), certainly Pascal Afgan(?) (26:11) Yupik, they had carved files, they had notebooks with words in them and other things like that, they had Greenlandic dictionaries, so they'd written in the margin looking for a word that would remind them of a Yupik word and bird books and fish books and whatnot(?) that had names written in them, cause for Yupik there are a lot of different dialects and areas, so you get a lot of different words for things. For me, what I used to like was to sit around having recently spent a year in a village and say "Well, now what do you call it when you're putting this net under the ice and what do you call that implement?" and I'd get the name for that or say "How do you say déjà vu in Yupik, do you have a word for that?", they were(?) "No we don't for that, but we have this other word for this other word thing that you don't seem to have in English" and the words would kind of grow that way.

AD: And how...would you know that you had a complete let's say dictionary?

SJ: You never know.

AD: You never know, OK.

SJ: You never know, even to this day, right now I've...well, this was the dictionary (point at a huge book), this red thing, it's the first Yupik dictionary, that was the fruit of my work and now, it was published 1984, I think and now so many years later, twenty years earlier, I've

started revising it and I see there's a lot that can be added, I have that box there full of editions, for new edition of the Yupik Eskimo dictionary, one thing you could do is look through stories, texts and find words that way, especially if you have a knowledge, Mike was always after me, he always said "Steve, you should be spending your time" like infinite time "looking through everything that....every book that comes along, because in your head you will know whether a word is in the dictionary or not, and if it's not it will stand up" and even now twenty years later that I can look through a book and if the words, I might not know a lot of the words what they mean but, we've got that word, remember enough to know that or we don't have that one. So...

AD: So, you told me about the workshop moving to Bethel and, did your work continue, I mean in terms of...did you have any communication with the workshop there?

SJ: Oh yes, in fact I was their Bethel's person in Fairbanks, I worked through them and for the new ANLC here. About two years after they moved, Irene came back, she had set it up there and it continued one way or another, eventually became part of the local school district but it continued training teachers and producing books but she herself wanted to come back to Fairbanks and she did and she became again the director, I guess, or coordinator or something of the Alaska Language Center, so she was working here again but now in ANLC. Was good to have her back, she lent something to the place that nobody else could and for a long time, Mike and Irene, each had their role, I know Ruth Riddley(?) from Eagle, used to talk about, Mon and Dad running the place, she was kind of right, they were kind of autocratic, you know, they had been working since the 1960s on this and all the rest of were Johnny come latelys. And, each had their own orientation in a way, if we published anything and we did publish a lot of these dictionaries, grammar books, collections of stories, Irene

was very insistent of proof reading and she would spent hours and hours with you sitting there, one person would do the reading and the other would have the ruler and be checking every line and then if there was time do it all over again. And there would still be mistakes that would get through, typos or these other mistakes but a lot less than when you don't proof read, if you just proof read something you've written yourself, you know what you want to say and just a million mistakes get through, it's terrible but she was very careful about that. Mike had his own thing, he would take something like a book that you were going to, you think it was all done and he would take it "let me see that", oh god, and I'd get it back, the manuscript and it would be covered with his scroll handwriting, things underlined, exclamation marks and crossed out, oh jeez, I just want to quit, go drive a truck, I don't want to this, I'm no good at this. You'd correct or you try to figure out what he was trying to say, ask him what's wrong with this and so on, and, well he's got a point, correct to change it, give it back to him, be the same process, then at a certain point he just short of either he lose, seemed like he just lost interest in it, but really I think that at that point, he figured "fine". And you'd know that if he'd gone over something, it was good, nobody else would be in a position to criticize it, so that I appreciated that, and I have published a number of things, which I appreciated his input. **(31:00)**.

AD: Back to the workshops now. So, you mentioned other individuals as well, like Martha Tilaq (?) and...they were like teachers not students? Or both?

SJ: Both.

AD: Both.

SJ: The two that had been here the longest, Martha Tilaq(?) and Pat Afgan(?) were older than your average college students, they were Yupiks, they had come back to college or come to

college rather later in their lives and they both graduated, but at the time, I think they graduated in 1972 or so, but at the time they're taking very few courses and really working pretty much full time for the Eskimo language workshop. And the Alaska Native Language Center sort of continued, there were some people who were students often older often people who either had gone to college before, like Linda Pamton(?), who worked with Siberian Yupik or Kanashiro(?), who really had no great interest in getting a college degree but rather just working with the language, and they'd often work here part time. My wife did that for many years, she worked part time...my wife had a college degree, but she had a degree in social work and never really interested in being a social worker, she loved working with the language, and she worked half time, writing, translating, transcribing, and the way it is, this place lived with people like that because without that you have linguistics and they don't have anything to work with. Yeah, I want to point out that I've since realized that the Native Language Center and the Eskimo language workshop, Yupik language center was very different than a lot of other places that do some work with native languages, I didn't realize that for the longest time but...the centrality of the native speakers was very important and the goal, the overriding goal was to take whatever we had gained, learned and put it in a form where people could use it, where the language speakers or the peoples whose parents and grandparents had spoken the language could use it, so in dictionaries, grammar books, collection of stories that kind of thing. And what was not given too much importance, although it was there, was things like going to linguistics conferences and making presentations or writing papers for technical journals, in fact Michael was very down on that, he said "That's exploiting people, it's...you go there and you pay a little old lady to tell you the stories of her people and then you just leave", this is what linguistics, some linguistics do,

find some curious little aspect of her phonology and write up a paper and you publish it and your fellow linguistics in far off places are all impressed and you get brownie points in your career and meanwhile the woman's lang....who gave you the story, her language dies and you've done nothing to help it. And he was very insistent that we should not be like that.

AD: How was this mentality accepted by the University?

SJ: I think pretty well, because the University like the fact with that mentality, we got a lot of support from the native community, we got people saying "the University has good things for us, look they published this dictionary for our language and this book of stories", which wouldn't have happened if all our efforts had been directed towards...

AD: So, obviously that's a....because Michael has spoken to me about this mentality, that saving the language was far more important than the academic aspect of it.

SJ: Yeah, right.

AD: So, you have all these students in the class and everyone is participating in different aspects of it, how about the non native students?

SJ: Well, it depends on the class.

AD: Right.

SJ: And over the course of time, of course, the big disappointment is that the languages have continued to decline, we didn't reverse things, I don't even know if slowed it down. So, there are less and less competent speakers coming into the Yupik classes and in the other languages there are virtually none, so then it's much more like a traditional classroom, where the teachers is teaching the material to the students...

AD: So, now the Central Yupik class doesn't have many students?

SJ: Well, doesn't have that many students period. But there isn't somehow languages, interest in language, native languages has declined, I think, that the languages have declined and it never has as many native speakers in it or really good native speakers as it used to?

AD: So, in terms of bilingual education what is being taught in the schools of that area?
English first?

SJ: It depends, you know, it's different probably in every school and certainly in every school district and in every area, some places have a pretty pretty full program for the first few grades where it's mostly taught in Yupik, with English being taught as a second language, introduced slowly. Other places it's like an hour a day or an hour a week, or something, short of enrichment, whatever they can do at that time. I don't think, the course of language decline is really influenced this much by the schools as we used to think, there are all kinds of factors, television and whatnot. This is where I'm much more pessimistic and most of my colleagues. But I think that in America the English language always wins out with two kinds of exceptions, one is a huge non-English language, like Spanish, which is gigantic in America and gets reinforcements all the time. And the other, if communities that willingly stay isolated, such as the Amish or the Hasititsue(?) who keep themselves apart from the rest world, no television, no...as little connection as possible with the English speaking world, they don't do that to preserve their languages, that's just a side effect. And, Alaska Natives and I think American Indians, natives in general have never been like that, so in villages television is a very big thing, cable TV, VCR, it's impossible to keep up with that, because there was an effort to make television shows in Yupik and some very clever, there was a Quiz show, you know to try to make a dramatic show would cost a fortune, Quiz show you just get people to stand behind podiums and ask them questions, it's fascinating but it's

also not as exciting as a movie and at the same time that the one television station in Bethel, at that time, was beginning to have a few Yupik shows, people started getting VCRs and then kids would watch Bruce Lee or whoever his name is, all in English and there is a lot of intermarriage, a lot of moving back and forth so that's very hard on the language preservation.

AD: Did you know, had you seen that decline in language in....let's say 75', 76'?

SJ: Not so much then, but yeah I guess, I could have seen it because the place where I had lived as a (?) volunteer had been an old mining camp, so there was a lot of English influence there and there were some children, who did not speak the native language at all. In our optimistic days we thought we'd revive it for everybody but I don't think that's happened. Now, there are many people and probably the majority of my colleagues here would say "Well, if we found the right technique", of teaching....now it's immersion is the key word that everybody is enthusiastic about, or if we raise people's consciousness, so they'll realize what they're losing, what they're missing, and this can be reversed, but I haven't been very interested in that so...

AD: Do you think that Irene Reed at the time viewed it the same? I mean it was her life's work.

SJ: Well, it's hard to say what Irene thought....

AD: So, you hadn't discussed it or....

SJ: We talked, yeah, we talked about it that do what you can while you can do it but....whether or not it would ultimately reverse things and keep the language going and whether or not that was the most important thing than other issues, and we all felt here, I think, that there was some transcendental reason for studying and documenting these

languages, for writing a dictionary and for recording stories and getting fiction written, writing grammar books that they were of value, even if the end they don't survive as spoken languages, because there's the hope you can offer people that, (?) to Hebrew, which revived, and now people say that maybe Welsh and Maori in New Zealand, Welsh in Wales and Maori in New Zealand, maybe Hawaiian are being revived. I don't know whether that's true, Hebrew (?) was revived. So, then and of course, none of this can happen if you haven't recorded something of what the language looks like. So, if your ultimate end is the hopes that that will happen in some time in the future, I mean, that's something that can inspire a person. For me, well, I don't really think in those terms, I guess. I wanted it to be down on paper, down on tape, recorded just because it exists and it's this fascinating creation of the human mind and I think of, it's the parallel argument, Michael and his later days working here, he spent increasing time talking about the world wide picture of language endangerment. He's one of the first people who drew attention to the fact that so many little languages were disappearing so fast. And, the comparison is often made with biological diversity and the partisans were keeping snail dodders(?) and tigers and whatnot alive as the...one of the....the argument I always hear, there might be some wonderful compound in some plant or in a snail dodders liver or something like that, that would cure cancer, Aids and if it's all eliminated because somebody plows up the language of the plant, raise beef for Mac Donalds and then we'll never get that stuff, and they point out these plants, the Madagascar periwinkle, that's a source of cancer drugs and whatnot. Kind of hard to do that with native languages, you can say and I believe Michael has said this, maybe buried in the native languages is the recipe for world peace, that's a little far fetch. And I really think that the reason that people have for preserving biological diversity is because it's a splendid creation

of Nature and God and whatnot. And we have no right to destroy it. And when you get to studying a language you realize that they are very complicated things, they are also a splendid creation and each language has its own genius, you can say things that you can't say conveniently in another language, and it's just this fascinating thing and you just want to see it preserved whether it will ever be revived or not, whether it will ever be maintained in the first place, whether it will be revived if it's not maintained and whether ever will have any practical value. You just want to see it continued in some form, documented at least.

AD: Do people, new students, learn the story you are telling me now, the history of the....

SJ: I guess, I am not sure. In my own Yupik classes that I've taught, I teach the Yupik language, I just don't teach much about the sociolinguistic history of these things, there is a class that teaches that. But I find that, it's very easy to get sidetracked from teaching a language, at all levels, to teaching culture or studying culture, as somebody once put it it's much easier to eat native than speak native....(interruption with the interviewees chair)....anyway the....so that a lot of these bilingual, that I always call bilingual/bicultural classes in elementary schools, end up spending a lot of time with native dance and native beading and native recipes cause that's something a child can learn to make Eskimo ice-cream fairly easily....(TAPE FINISHES)

AD: OK, we are back.

SJ: Yeah, anyway it's much more easy and rewarding in a way, cause this way they'll learn something, whereas even if they learn a little tiny bit of the ancestral language, to think that they are going to sit down and have a conversation and listen to a traditional story is kind of pushing it. So, a lot of this bilingual/bicultural programs at lower grades turn into more bicultural or native cultural and neglect the language, learn a few terms, for special foods

and...I don't want my college level class to become that way, so I really stir it away from two things, I stir it away from talking about culture, its going to be language, learning language, and I stir it away from arguments about whose at fault and what's the fault for the decline of native languages, cause one can make a case that it's the schools that used to punish children for speaking English, even when their tradition was even there, the momentum of discouraging, I mean for not speaking English, discouraging native language continues, even if the school gives lip service by having native languages. Or one can say it's the fact that these languages are so tiny to start with that they don't have enough critical mass to keep going or one can say "Well, having been missionized and encouraged to accept the universal religion of Christianity, it's to accept the universal language in English, you know. One can argue about this, and I am sure there are lots of classes that do and I don't want to do that in mine because in my class I can teach languages and that's something that I can't get anywhere else.

AD: It came to my mind, how were your efforts of the time of the early years of the workshop being accepted by non-natives in the communities you were working?

SJ: Well, there were some teachers, traditional teachers, who were very much opposed to that, who thought that the best way to help children was to get them to speak English and forget this native language baggage, the sooner they learn English the better. These are non native teachers but also some natives too. So there was some opposition. Curiously, the argument they used has been turned on its head now because the were saying that the best way to get students into the modern world was to immerse them in English, this term immersion, short of like teach a person to swim by throwing him and they damn well better swim and of course Michael Krauss with his analogy of teaching a person to play a violin

without riding a bicycle, was (?) opposed to that, but now that the languages are very much in decline the argument has come back on the other side where partisans of revival of the language will say “the best way to revive the language, is to have their language entirely in their language, so the kids have to learn how to speak their ancestral language”, “Wait a minute, we arguing against this before but now it’s become popular in the other side”, but I haven’t gone very much with, for many years, with education at a lower level, it’s the method, the teacher training, the production of books, the whole question of the suitability of a book like this, for somebody who doesn’t know the language to start with, those...I can think about those, I can talk about those but I don’t really deal with them, I’ve dealt with documentation of the language and teaching college, and I’m very pleased with the work that Mike and Irene did here, I think it’s very important that they saved these documents, like in our archives and tapes, because it disappears and it’s gone and whether or not anybody will appreciate it in the future, be able to understand it, or how well, maybe it’s another thing, but if it’s not there, there is no hope. And I know that, it’s kind of funny, my own personal feelings have changed about this. First (?) of mine, this is a funny story, when I was a freshman in College and was taking an English class and we were told to write, we were told that there is a linguistics Professors up in Alaska, who got a big grant to study a language, that had two or three living elderly speakers, this was Eyak. Some people say if there’s only that few speakers it’s utmost importance that be studied now before it disappears, other people say why bother? Why waste the money on that one, when there’re so many pressing needs in the world, take a position and write about it. Of course, 1960s birthday California, my position was spent the money on human needs, real human needs. Since then I realized, well yeah, if you can be sure the money was actually spent for starving people, yeah, but if

it's going to be spent for going to Mars or something, it might as well be spent on this language, it's disappearing, we'll never have another chance to study. Also, when...the library, first I thought always, going to so much trouble with these archives because if you want to find out about what people say you can just ask somebody. Well that was true at the time, there were a lot, even 18 year old Yupik (?), vast vocabulary, you could just sit and chat with them and learn all kinds of things but now it's not so true. Also, I found that many of those things were written down by some explorer, nobody would recognize them now, but then you go to a very old person "Oh yeah, that word, Jee I haven't heard that word in 30 or 50 years" but it's real and it's because it's written down. So, I really have grown increasingly to appreciate that documentation, I think it's exceedingly important.

AD: Right, and as a last question what problems did the workshop face that you had to overcome or was it like, it was such a revolutionary, lets say, standing as an underdog project, you know, against all odds or something like that?

SJ: Well yeah yeah, there was....you see, I didn't face them in a way because the ones who did battle for the workshop and for the Alaska Native Language Center, were Michael Krauss, he was very good at that and Irene, each in their own way, but if I can remember correctly there were people who said, its constant refrain was that it's worthless, these languages are dying and they're primitive and limited, they might as well die, who cares and you heard that even from college educated people, I still hear that occasionally, so what? People who couldn't even be convinced that as a matter of academic study it was worth studying this fantastically complicated systems, people who would "Oh of course, unlimited money should be spent on the sex life of some little worm somewhere, that only occurs in some little few miles of land", "yes of course, that's science, that's nature but how about

studying the language of people?”, “...one language is as good as another, what does it matter?”, you still get that. Another thing that, not proposition but to me is a perpetual battle is that it takes immense amount of effort to do a language just to settle, to write a dictionary took you years and years and years, computer helps, at first we had card files and we typed them up and then write in notes and retype them and write in notes and retype them many times, good way to learn but very time consuming and to get examples of this is extremely painstaking even now. Lot of people don't like that kind of work, they say, it's better to just take some little aspect of little language and maybe prove some linguistic point, that Chomsky might appreciate or somebody, who's into modern linguistic thing and that's the real value. As Michael Krauss once said that, he went to MIT at about the time that transformational linguistics was a big thing there, he said that it was a breath of stale air for him, I liked that, but the other kind of values that made the Oxford English dictionary possible, you know, there's been several books about that, about Murray, huge effort that they went to to make that dictionary and hard copy with the (?) dictionary and Aliesa (?) with the Hebrew dictionary, it's a whole life time's work and that's really what it takes. And to record all these stories and study them in great detail and transcribe them accurately, translate them and whatnot it's....for whatever uses it's going to be put, it's an immense amount of work and I think it's very worthwhile, it should be encouraged.

AD: So, I think we are done as a summary of your work, what would you say as an afterthought?

SJ: My own work?

AD: Your experience with the Central Yupik program...

SJ: I wish that we had done more when we had the opportunity, I didn't realize how quickly it was erasing away from us, I wish that I had spent more time with the tape recorder recording people, because there's great deal of diversity, even within one language Central Yupik and there're all kinds of odd corners that now the language is gone or almost gone and I wish we had the time finding out what it was like in those odd corners, but of course you can only do so much, limited funds, limited people, even if you had a lot of people, there's limited training, it takes....it's an art even to operate a tape recorded, I know that, I've listened to old tape recordings and it's just terrible to somebody, you really didn't know what they were doing and others are just excellent...

AD: OK