

Narrator: Della Keats
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[side one]

Della Keats [DK]: ...help mother all the time, you know. You do this and that, she always told me. And call me. Just when I sit and try to listen to the teller, story teller. At us. I doesn't write it down. Boy, that old man have lot of stories. But these two, what I get from my mother. And the one my brother told me. I'm the oldest than him, all right. But he told me what he heard at qarigi. The mens get together and bring their tools, Eskimo tools, and making something. Making a wooden spoon for his wife or a horn. My old dad used to make a spoon, a dipper, made out of sheep horn. You know, a sheep mountain horn. See, upside down. Hard work, all right. That's what my brother next to me, he get it from the mens when they telling us stories while they're working, and some men try to telling us stories. So he get it. I never believe it.

One time we go from Rabbit Creek, we're the last ones. And it get really windy; almost catch us. Finally, we got in where there's a creek at Anaiak, the coast, way down. Way up next to Kivalina. Rabbit Creek was there. So then we stopped there, and then Mama tell us to get drifted little woods for burning outdoors. She want to cook something for us. And then we, my brother and I, take a gunny sack each. He was around seven. And he's around seven, eight year old. And six year old. And six, five. Five or six. And then while I was picking those sticks on the seashore, you know the wave? While I was picking them, I saw a black thing

in the ocean, ready to cover it with the water. So then, when I saw it, just like this, it was looking at me like this. My goodness, what's that! Animal, big animal was almost catch me! Maybe you wear red parka covers. I wear some kind of a red parka cover. I don't know what kind it is. So I run backward to my brother. So just when we're just going, looking for driftwood, we getted them, and on the way back we put them in a sack and carried them home.

So then, while we were looking there, there's a like this on the ocean. On the beach shore. There's a beluga. Heyyy! If we have gun all right, but maybe he could get one, one whole beluga himself. A white whale. So then later on, we saw a black animal, was standing like this. The breast was white. And looking at us. And while we were standing, he dived down. Dived down again. We can't move anymore. We get kind of scared! So then he comes up with beluga. Big beluga, all right, but he's still standing. And looking at us. And my brother say, "We want to eat muktuk, too. Give us share." "Hmmp," I say, "Hmmp! I never believe it. 'Cause that animal wouldn't hear you, what you say. "How come you told him to give you a share? How we going to get it?" And then he told me he listens to the mens. He go with my old daddy to qarigi. And the mans talked about the killer whale. Killer whales are the dangerous animal that have full of teeth up to their ears. Their mouth open, and that teeth really sharp. And they're just like a person. Even you talked about them at your home, "That killer whale, I could kill it." No way! They always tell us not to say anything about killer whales at us. At our home. Even though there's nothing, killer whale, but you're able to fight killer whale. Whenever you see them, I could shoot at them and kill them. That killer whale somewhere listens. Listens to you

when you say something. So they can't forget even the person shoot at them. Or throw rocks to them, make funny at them. Them animals. When I say, "Hmmp! I wouldn't believe you." 'Cause I can't believe it. How we going to get a share of muktuk from that animal? And while we were coming home, there's no animal anymore, when it dive down. Just like a salmon, just a pink salmon, you know, big ones. Just like a salmon, easy. Just moving his flipper and head. Big one, too. But he was standing right on the ocean with beluga. So he say, "Give a share. We sure hungry for muktuk, too." "Hmmp," I say, "Hmmp!" to him. I never believe him.

So when we were coming home, we saw the big blubber, red blubber, a block. It was really hot when I go have my--he run to it and ah! Stop it from going down. The wave be back and forth. So then he stop it. I go help him. And it was warm. He take his little knife off and make loop for us to take home. He give us there! Even though I never believe it. Gee! I was so surprised at that animal! Even maybe when my brother tell me just like whispering, maybe that animal could hear. I guess I don't know [laughs]. Maybe he will!

That's why they never forget and give us share. That's why the mens that time, they always tell the boys not to shoot at them, not to make funny words to them. They got ears to hear. And they never forget. They one they shoot to them, them killer whale that have hump, little hump on the black. You know, just like a fish. This way. Those are--when I saw them, they're listeners, just like listeners. When you fellows are listen to me, and they listen to it, when a person would say something against them. And they know it. Later on [inaudible], years and years, never forget it. That's why them old people tell us not to talk about them. That's why I used to tell the boys well before they could hunt. I tell my

boys not to shoot at them. Gee! They could hear. Just a few words my brother say, "Give us share, we want to eat muktuk, too." And I never believed. They won't give us [inaudible]. I tell and I believe it when I work on it and carry it home. It was still hot, that block, just like a man cut with knife. Really square. [laughter] Never forget. 'Til they get it, one man--I didn't tell you about, Dennis, about this man that was telling me one day, when my sons get big to tell them how. That's a killer whale.

He used to tell his boys, long ago, from Shishmaref, this is the Shishmaref men, he used to tell them not to do any harm to killer whale. But his boys never listened. Never listened. And when they saw a killer whale, he start shooting at it. And miss it. And whenever he hunt, he's afraid to go alone. Alone. He has crew. He have boat to hunt with. Seven boys. He takes seven men to go hunt ugruk with his engine boat. And one day they get nothing, when it starts windy they come back. And [inaudible] jumped. He was the first one that jumped from the boat and run and come back. He forget something in the boat. So these, while he was coming back, he met his crew that go on the boat hunting. They get nothing. 'Cause it's so windy. So then they didn't know a killer whale was around. And all of a sudden the rest of the crew jumping off and go! [laughter] And this man that have boat was coming back to the boat while he was climbing. You know, there's a little thing right here and on the other side to hold on, when you walk outside of it. It have house, the boat have house and the windows. While he was going to the [Inupiaq word spoken] a killer whale's head, and bite. And there was no [Inupiaq word spoken] no more. What they do, his wife met all the boys his crew. He was just going back. Maybe he's in the boat! They go see the boat, but there's nobody. And then they start seining it. "Maybe it's

better for us to seining with net somehow, and move the boat a little further over there so we sein, maybe go there. Maybe be he [inaudible] or fall from the boat and he drown." So when they come near to it, there's a killer whale, big one, going out towards the ocean from the mouth of a bay. And when they found it, when they check it, there's a spot around there. He kill it, with his teeth [Inupiaq spoken], chew it. They kill. Just because he was alone. Alone in a boat. Just because. With the crew he can't. The way they want to hold it, all right. Them killer whales. Just when he's alone and go back to boat, they catch it and kill it. You should tell your boys like that. Your nephews somehow what they could hunt. Not to shoot at killer whales. He told me while I was carrying Perry, my [inaudible] boy. He told me to tell him. So I tell him. I used to tell the boys, "Leave it alone." To leave it alone, the killer whale. Even you ladies, don't say anything about them. They'll know you, they'll know you. That's a way to learn it, right now. If you fellas have a boys or a husband, maybe you should tell them not to shoot or make fun of them at home. Them killer whales. Those are true. True stories. I tell you what I've seen! That's a true story. That's not just story. I'm not telling you--I'm not a real story teller. I don't know. But the third one I learned from my--I listen to my mother.

My mother always tell me what--she always give me a true thought, put it in my mind and I thought of it. She--maybe she did and give me. That's what she say, so you love your neighbors and all your children. Don't hate either one of them. Maybe she give me a thought to think. Just like this. There's two--in Point Hope, maybe down in Point Hope, there's a big lake right there. And these two, a woman and a man, a young boy [inaudible]. Her husband died. And left alone his son and his mother. And somehow

he hunting, he hunting. Take something home or anything, that she dried it. Dried the food what he get. Everything. And then, someday, she began to think, "What in the world my son? Somehow maybe I let her sick and die. So I'm alone and have these food he gather for me." And then she somehow think and think and think somehow that he can't see. That he get blind. She think it over. She think it over. And this man start to have eye problems, and then he gets blind. And when she get hungry when he get blind, when he can see nothing! He smell something, food, that he always eat before when mother cook for him. He smell it, all right. And when it time to eat, the mother always give her some stinky food. She cook to herself and ate good. Give his son ugly food, just only bones. Maybe sometimes with [Inupiaq word spoken], nothing. 'Cause he can't see nothing. Boy, that woman! I wouldn't do that myself to anyone. That woman is something. And then, every time she feeds him, she always give him ugly food. Never drink broth, even. [Inupiaq word spoken]. And then he always go with a came to the lake, and he always heard loons right there. Some loons was there. And he came. He find a way with a stick. He always go bathroom way up towards the lake. So one night, towards when it starts freeze-up, a loon--he was going to bathroom towards the lake where he used to go, with a cane [inaudible]. And the loon start talking to this man, a son to her. "You know what? Your mother wants to kill you somehow and let you blind. You can see nothing! Your mother didn't love you, and just give you a blind." Somehow he was thinking over it, and he ate at his food with [inaudible]. Gee! And this boy start, can't see nothing. That's how come the mother hate him so much. And let him blind. His only son.

And one day before the freeze-up, that loon talk to this boy when he go to bathroom. "Let's see. If you do what I say, maybe

you will start see. You could see everything when you do my words that I tell you to do. You hold me tight and close your eyes, and I dive down. Three times." On the third time, his eyes were open. This is how the loon, the bird, you know, "Aaaawk!" A loon's "Aaaawk!" [laughs] That can't walk, but they fat, kind of short wings. Loons. And tell this boy that he could see when he do the one he tell him to do. Three times he dived down and start to see. And he play. Just use his cane all the way home. As long he could see everything, he starting to Fall now. I don't know what time he get blind. And then when he go home, night time, he lay out his blue [Inupiaq spoken], maybe. While he was laying, mama cook and he saw the cook what he gave him. There's worms in it, too. Just only a bowl. And he see his dish and he push it. "[Inupiaq word spoken]," he call, "Son, you could see now." He started. "You could see now? Why you push your dish over this way, what I give you?" She know it that he could see now. And then his boy kind to her, and start making a boat, a skin boat. He stay out making a boat. She never say nothing to his mother. Nothing. So when he finish it, his mother and him cover it with skins. But mama put it away, [inaudible] with ugruk skins. He wait 'til it finish. Wait and wait 'til it East wind. From the place where they stay. East. That mean when this boat was there, it's right, it will blow up a [inaudible] across way down. He put dried meat, lot of dried meat, and a big pot for tea. And water. Maybe a--I don't know where she go right now. Maybe Siberia, I...[laughs]. Maybe Siberia just because the Siberians are the Eskimos right now, eh? Maybe Siberia. 'Cause he have no paddle. He put everything in the boat. I wouldn't myself. I wouldn't--keeping food. Because he never love his son. His only son. And let him blind.

That's what Mama tell us to love each other. When somebody needs

help, she always tell me to help somebody. Without any pay. Without any award, even. Just try to help the old peoples that can't do nothing. We need to help them. And I find out right now, 'cause I'm getting old. People invite me and give me food. The food, we have to eat everything. And we give thanks to other people, too, when they treat us. Don't say a word that was against them. Be nice to everybody. Maybe that some of the stories. I have only two stories [laughs]. I never learn stories. That's why. If I have no long story, maybe Hilda have. I guess, I don't know. I don't know. I forget to ask her to tell a story [laughs].

DD: Did your brother tell you those stories?

DK: Huh?

DD: Did your brother tell you the stories?

DK: My mother.

DD: Oh, your mother did?

DK: Yeah. That's what I was--she tell me this is the truth! This is not a story. But I could not talk about a killer whale. That's not a story. We just stopped each others and telling me that he learned from the mens, that they were talking about.

DD: You--earlier when we talked, you said that the men used to get together at the qarigi?

DK: Qarigi. They always get together, even in springtime. The girls never go to the men. Only little boys always follow their daddy. But they never are walking around in qarigi any place. I know when they do that. And next to me, my brother. He always listen to the other mens when he go. [inaudible] and do something,

work together. Ah! Helping each others. Maybe it would be enjoyable [laughs].

DD: The men told stories to each other.

DK: Yeah, told stories each other, any old way! What they hear is what they do. They always tell the truth.

DD: And the women went there just to take food there?

DK: Yeah. I asked my mother--I wanted to follow my dad when he go up, all right, to qarigi. "No, no, no, no! The girls never follow their daddies when they have a meeting up there." Just the boys always go. She don't want me to go with my daddy. Maybe somehow I wanted--maybe somehow I wanted to eat what the other ladies bring them to their husband [laughs]. Any kind of a [Inupiaq word spoken]. Any kind of food.

DD: The women just brought the food in? They didn't stay to eat?

DK: No. Everybody have to bring some food. Some food for there, gathered together and work. All just be happy. There's no way to find, you know, mad each others.

DD: Did anybody stay there or sleep there?

DK: No, we--just the orphan boys. Orphans only sleep there off and on, next days sleep another couple's. The orphans, 'cause he have no mother and dad. He have to sleep there where it's warm. Making a big room, a small room for men's in winter when they camping together. They make qarigi, where to stay there in winter time. In summer time it's more easy. They stay out together. It's more easy. I know. But in winter time, maybe, they always making building. They're [Inupiaq word spoken]. Okay.

DD: Why don't we take about five minute break. It's getting a little bit warm in here and...

DK: Yeah. Five minutes break [laughs].

DD: It'll be about ten minutes. If I say ten minutes, it'll be fifteen.

DK: Yeah.

[inaudible conversation during break]

DD: Della, one of the men who went up to Kotzebue talked with people there, and he said that a long time ago there used to be wars. And we read about that. Did you hear anything, when you were young, about wars between the villages or [inaudible] up there? Did they ever tell anything about that?

DK: I really don't know, but my mother, when I ask her about that, "The ones that hate each others are fighting each others. How come?" And she just telling me the one she saw it. Her parents, my mother's parents, and this two couples from Noatak, they go together in one boat, going up. And this Noatak man was handling a few dogs, pulling the boat. And this Kobuk man [Inupiaq spoken]. My grandpa was a pilot, just like a pilot. He taking care of the boats, which way to go. While this man was pulling the line. While they were doing that, their wives were sitting right on the front, and when the dogs start looking backward, to the willows, these ladies saw a person was running. And hiding. And there he was [gives Inupiaq name].

[side two]

DK: ...saw it. He saw that they were from Kobuk area. And he know them by their acting, you know, their running. Those are the Kobuk people. Try to catch--try to fight the only one boat. They want to kill it. My grandfather's. And my grandpa, gee. And they disappear from on. They stop and wait for them, all right. On their way up. That's my grandpa. They were so hate each others. Long time ago! Maybe this is how they get together: one man he was go to the village and get married. I mean, they never get married long time ago [laughs]. Just grab a woman for your wife, the one you like [laughs], the girls. They say something, all right, but they can't--when a man hold them. Just like a baby, rock-a-bye baby. A woman, when they get it. They never feel it. They never let her go. That's mean he takes this girl for his wife. That is how people always hate, and they get together. Just like this Indian people. Indian, when they go together some places way up, they give one boy to adopt for these Kobuk area couples. They adopt from Indian, a little boy. And he get married. Married at Kobuk area. And Indian doesn't feel like to fight the Kobuk people no more. They love each others right now. They doesn't do anything like that. Those are--Indian people are--they have good hearts. I mean good thought, you know. Good thought and good mind and good heart. Yeah! They really thought because they fight each others with bow and arrow. Make boy when he got gun right now, they would hate each others for good. So then these Indian people give one boy to Kobuk area people, and these couples love him so much and let him go. That is how they acquainted each others. And there's no more fighting. If they hate like that, I wouldn't have--Hilda wouldn't be friend now [laughs]. I'm no dummy, and she's from Point Hope.

I don't know the stories myself. Just the true stories what

I've seen. But this other lady that I didn't see, Mama was telling a story about this young guy, that his mother let him blind. And get the one he wanted. He thought it would--when she treat him with ugly food. Stinky food. The food any place. Always get-- mens always get mad for food. The kids can go without food. The children can go without food. The food from the beginning, they started with when this mother stingy to his children. They started. The fighting started. At their home. Gee.

Okay, questions? Anyone?

Student: Della, do you know the name of the couple that took the Indian boy? Have you heard their names?

DK: No. I don't know. I never asked around.

Student: My grandma tells it almost the same way you told your story.

DK: Yeah.

Student: [inaudible] you could tell me that.

DK: From Point Hope? That is what--mine was from Point Hope, I guess. 'Cause when I ask my mother, when he tell the story, "Where was that Mom?" "Maybe Point Hope," she say. 'Cause there's nothing on the--just no trees, no willows. Just like a Point Hope's are, right now. There's no hills, just a flat.

Student: Are a lot of the [inaudible] part, Athabascans?

DK: They like Athabaskan. Maybe they started begin love each others. Before that some of the [Inupiaq spoken] always telling, all right. But I never get it. Get it and tell it. 'Cause there's a big hill in that mountain where there's Indian spot with

[Inupiaq spoken]. I don't know about them. It's part of, you know, from the beginning. Maybe some of the people know it, all right, the old people. There's no more old people. Right now, old peoples are gone. I'm the oldest now, I guess [laughs]. I'm older than her! [laughter]

DD: Are there any other questions?

Student: How old did your mom and dad get to be?

DK: Huh?

Student: How old were your mom and dad when they died? Do you know?

DK: When they died? Eighty-two; eighty-six. My mother was eighty-two, and my father was eighty-six.

Student: Did people usually live to be pretty old?

DK: Not pretty old, all right. But my uncle was hundred and ten year old. And still he got his regular teeth. Only one broken. Just broke, not even pulled. It's my uncle, Mark Mitchell. My maiden name is Mitchell. I was so surprised at that. I'm not a good dentist, boy! I hate that. I never--I always have toothache before when I was young. Toothache, boy it's hurt. And I never tried to help people with that, too. [laughter]

DD: It's just about five o'clock, now. I think we should take a break. Before we break, just one announcement. You have an extra question sheet to take with you, to think about questions for next time. Next time I'd like to try, Della, to have students ask you questions, and so think about a question that you might like to ask. There's certainly not going to be time, I would think, for

everyone to get in a question, but think about something that you'd like to have Della talk about, and write a question, read it next week. But also turn it in to me at the end of the class. Then I'll give you another sheet next week. Or in the next class. Okay, see you on Thursday. Turn in one question now.

[inaudible conversation]

[end of tape]