



Tollef Monson

Transcript of an Oral History

Conducted by

Anjuli Grantham

at

Broken Point, Uganik Bay, Alaska

On June 19, 2015

(With subsequent corrections and additions)

Kodiak Historical Society

About West Side Stories

This oral history is part of the West Side Stories project of the Kodiak Historical Society. West Side Stories is a public humanities and art project that intended to document the history of the west side of Kodiak Island through oral history, photography, and art. The oral histories chart the personal stories of individuals with a longtime connection to the west side of Kodiak Island, defined for the scope of this project as the area buffeted by the Shelikof Strait that stretches from Kupreanof Strait south to the village of Karluk. The project endeavored to create historical primary source material for a region that lacks substantive documentation and engage west side individuals in the creation of that material.

The original audio recording of this interview is available by contacting the Kodiak Historical Society. Additional associated content is available at the Kodiak Historical Society/ Baranov Museum, including photographs of interview subjects and west side places taken during the summer of 2015, archival collections related to the west side, and journals and art projects created by west side residents in 2015.

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Note on Transcription

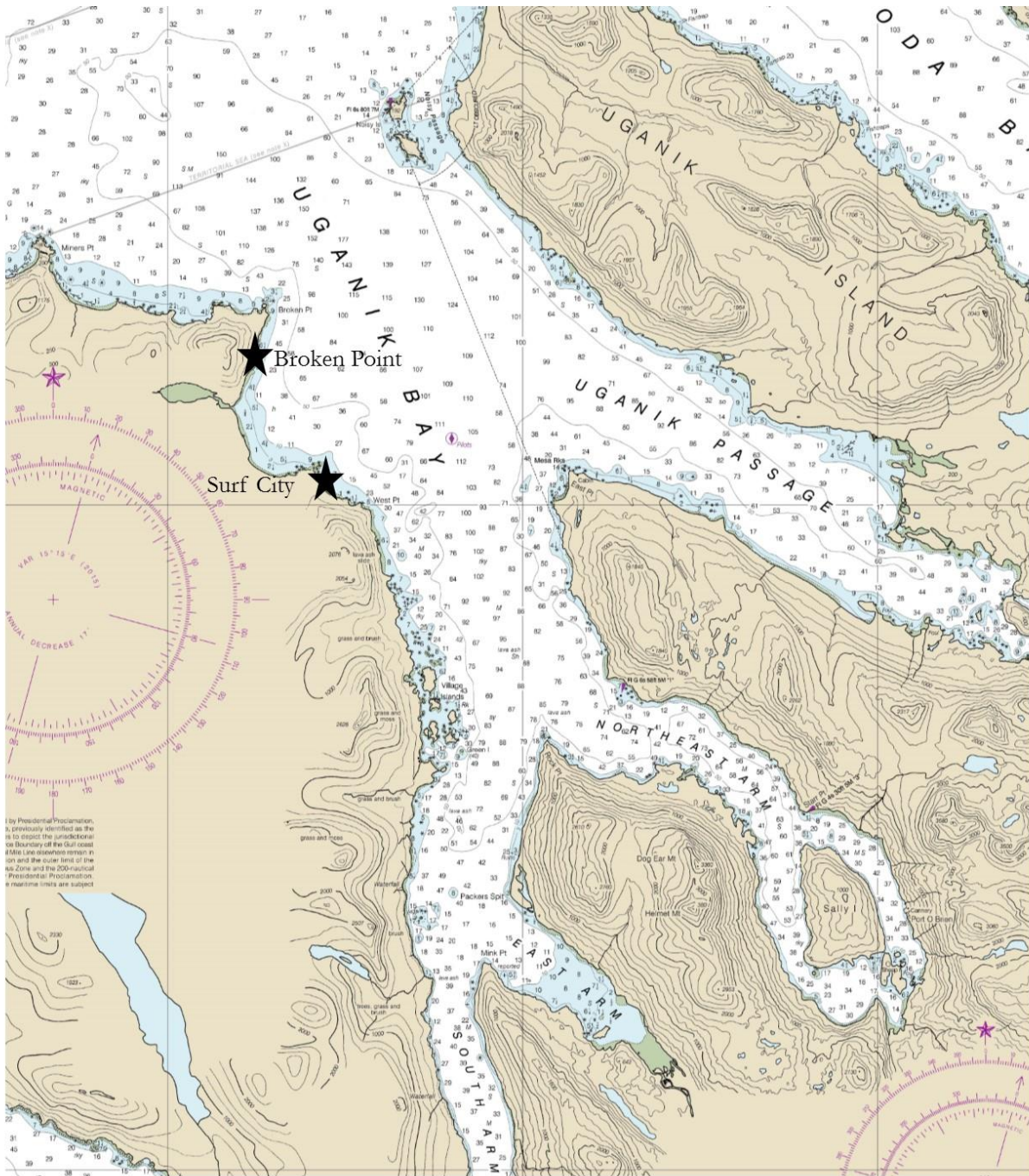
After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The following transcript is nearly a word-for-word transcription of the oral history interview. Editing is intended to make the interview easier to understand. Bracketed words indicate they were added after the interview. The use of [...] indicates that something that was spoken does not appear in the transcription. Often, these are false starts. In some cases, it is information that the interview subject retracted later. The original audio file is available for listening.

Citation

Tollef Monson, interview P-1002-04 by Anjuli Grantham in Uganik Bay, Alaska, 19 June 2015, (Kodiak, Alaska: Kodiak Historical Society).

Key Words: Uganik Bay, Broken Point, setnetting, dog mushing

Cover photo: Tollef Monson, left, and his brother, Ilkke Monson, right, at Broken Point on June 19, 2015. Photographed by Breanna Peterson for West Side Stories. P-1000-8-198.



Select locations within UganiK Bay mentioned in the interview.

Oral History of Tollef Monson

AG: Okay. So today is June 19. Correct?

TM: Correct.

AG: Okay. Today is June 19, 2015. I'm sitting here with Tollef Monson.

TM: Greetings.

AG: We are at Broken Point.

TM: We are.

AG: Uganik Bay, and this interview is being conducted as part of the West Side Stories project.

TM: And it's northeast. Light northeast [wind]. It's typical. Typical Broken Point weather fishing.

AG: What is the typical [...] Broken Point weather?

TM: Well, our best fishing, like most people, is on shore winds. So northeast for us is better than most winds, but this year is another very quiet fishing year. We went through quite a few years of starvation fishing [...] 'cause this site is a Karluk red site. So if Karluk reds are healthy, we're healthy. If it's not, we're hurting. So at least, you know, we're getting the fishing time this year and keeping busy.

AG: What constitutes a starvation year?

TM: When you're [...] picking seven fish a day out of your nets, you know that's pretty bad. [...] And we won't know till the end. I'm always optimistic and you kind of have to be so. And you also, if you're a fishermen, you have to be a gambler, you know, because you don't know what's in store. You have to be kind of ready to just throw the dice and see what happens. Kind of like farming maybe. You're at the whims of nature, right? So yeah.

AG: So where are you from and where were you born?

TM: I was born in 1979 in Minneapolis, and when I was twenty I moved to Alaska in hopes of getting a handling job. Handling the sled dogs. So I did that for a winter and that was great. And then I came across this guy, Dave Little, and he described this horrible, awful job where you'd be cold and wet, living in a shack of questionable building, and so I started fishing for him. And I was a little disappointed that it wasn't as rugged as it was, even though my particular bunk I had to sleep in between rain drops and the bugs went pretty freely. And so I did that for three years with him.

AG: Where and when was that?

TM: That would've been 2001, '02 and '03, and that was next door at Surf City.

AG: Okay. So what sort of experiences did you have in your youth which maybe might have propelled you towards being a commercial fishermen?

TM: I had no dreams, no idea, no plans to be a commercial fishermen. I just needed a summer job. What I do like, and have always liked, is being outside. And so my parents we always traveled a lot. We always camped a lot. We always did outdoor stuff and then reading a lot of books. So you get an idea of what is out there in the world and what you could do or what's available what to do with your life.

AG: Why is that you determined that you wanted to be involved with sled dogs?

TM: Like I said, reading and [...] growing up in Minnesota I never was afraid of winter. I like winter and so I wanted more winter and I found more winter in Alaska, particularly when I was living for seven years up above the Arctic Circle in Kotzebue.

AG: Was it Kotzebue that you moved to from Minnesota?

TM: No, I spent a year in Kenai. There was too many people and it was not [...] cold enough, so I learned about this guy, Ed Eaton, who lived on an island in the Arctic with four Icelandic horses and a bunch of sled dogs. And part of that came true. It wasn't an island, but it was an island of civilization out in the middle of nowhere, so it was [...] kind of like out here where you have to plan ahead, you have to stock up, you eat a lot of pilot bread at different times of the year. And so it was twenty-five miles from Kotzebue, kind of like here. It's a journey to get to town.

AG: And tell me about your first impression of up there.

TM: Up there? Well, Kotzebue itself doesn't look like much. It's flat, it's out on a peninsula, there's no trees for twenty miles. There's like, you know, lots of sea ice in the wintertime. Which you learn that it's not necessarily the place, it's people, and so when you get out to the sort of camp, the house, where all the dogs are and the horse and everything, there's this whole energy and life going on at forty below or fifty below or whatever. So you learn to camp out at those temperatures. The dogs love it. You kind of pick up on it.

AG: And is it from him that you learned how to handle dogs and to be a musher or how did that all take place?

TM: Yeah, pretty much. [...] As a handler you go to work for somebody saying, "Hey, I'm a human being with two hands and two arms and two legs and I like to work outside," and they go, "Okay, here's a shovel." And then you go and you shovel dog shit and you learn to hook up sled dogs in their harness and care for them and feed them, and you know, all that stuff. And then you learn to drive a sled and then pretty soon you're doing small races and then you're doing Iditarod and then on and on. So it's like anything. You start somewhere with no knowledge of anything and you slowly work up.

AG: So was it as you expected it to be? I mean being tempted north because of the reading that you've done and wanting the cold winters? Did Alaska live up to your imagination and your expectations or how was it—?

TM: [...] Well, there's different parts of Alaska. Bush Alaska definitely has town. Road Alaska is the same as anywhere else. Maybe there's forty below in Fairbanks, but there's still Walmart. There's still whatever. So for me, bush Alaska is where it's at. [...] That can live up to expectations that are more rugged, more out there. It all depends on what you're looking for.

AG: What was your first impression then of the west side when you came out here?

TM: Lots of green. Lots of green. [...] First I was coming from Kenai where it was just brown, just solid brown. Then down here was like already greening up, and I don't know, [...] I was like, "Yeah, this can work," and I already knew [...] before my first year ended, I knew I wanted to come back.



Broken Point, 2015. P-1000-8-206.

AG: Why?

TM: I liked it. I liked who I was working for. I liked all the jellyfish in your face and the stinging in your eyes and being so tired just being able to stand for like ten seconds with your eyes closed was like a treat. Which turned out to be a good trick later because on the Iditarod, you're mashing down the trail and you haven't slept in a long time and you take like a five second nap 'cause you're just falling asleep, and then you almost fall off the sled and you almost lose your team and then your hearts racing. You're like, "Oh my God, I just almost lost a team." You're wide awake for about five minutes and then you're kind of like dozing off 'cause the Yukon is horrible at night at forty below. It's cold. It's, you know, a mile wide. There's nothing to look at. The dogs are having a great time but mushers aren't necessarily so.

AG: How is that similar to setnetting?

TM: Well, I don't know, sort of [...] you're out there. There's no wheel house, you're not sitting in a boat, there's nowhere, you know, you're just outside. You know I guess the guys out on deck are outside. [...] I don't know.

AG: What do you remember of your first season?

TM: Lots of jellyfish. Being really tired which was good prep for mushing. I don't know, [...] you just start to get to feel the community and what's going on. You don't know anything, everything's new.

AG: What did you learn?

TM: Learned how to work that's for sure. As casual as Dave Little might seem on shore, when it's work time it's time to work, and back then at least it was work from four am to eleven pm. No time for reading books, newspapers, none of that. No, huh-um. What else did I learn? I don't know. How to pick fish.

AG: Was that all fishing work or was it painting work and mowing the lawn work, too?

TM: Oh there's plenty of busy work, yeah, but yeah when you're open a lot, you can just fish all day, you know. [...] You know fishing is good because you learn like, maybe for some people who don't necessarily know it, but you get to learn there's a job to do and you gotta go do it. The weather sucks, still gotta go do it. You're tired, you still gotta go do it.



Don Fox. P-986-24.

AG: So how did fishing correspond or compliment to your winter work?

TM: Well, I mean they're both seasonal. I mean fishing, you could fish all year round if you wanted to, but the difference sort of is fishing you could make money. Mushing, there's no money to be made. [...] But I would get off salmon, get two days off, and I would fly to Kotzebue and I'd start running dogs right away. And then I would work until the end of April and I'd get May off, and then we'd start again with salmon at the end.

AG: So no vacation?



David Little. P-1001-04-1.

TM: We got May off. Didn't get weekends, but who needs weekends, right? 'Cause it's a lifestyle. I mean that's what we're talking about here, right? It's not like a job. I never felt like mushing or fishing was a job.

AG: Could you maybe talk more about that? How was it a lifestyle versus a job?

TM: Well a lifestyle, for one, you have to be pretty committed to be out here. I mean everybody who's here is like, "We're living life out here." [...] At the end of the day, you still have a skiff in the water you gotta be thinking about. You still have a net in the water you gotta be thinking about. You know, you're aware of wind shift changes. In town, all they care about is like whether it's going to rain. That's like the main weather forecasting. Is it going to rain and what the temperature is. Out here we're concerned about more than you have to be, but.

AG: You said 2000, 2001 was your first season out here at Surf City, and what other sites have you fished?

TM: So I fished there for three years and then I came here for three years 'cause I wanted to get away from a crazy man named Dave Little, who's my good friend, and he would take that as [...] a compliment. And then I went to work for another crazy man named Don Fox and we're really good friends still, and so then I just wanted to try a different site and I didn't want to be like so sleep

deprived all year round. So I came over to Don's where it's a little bit more relaxed, but we were still fishing seriously. And then Don wanted to sell out and get out and his sons didn't want to fish at that time. And [...] by my fifth year I still wasn't really into like owning and then by my sixth year, then I was like, "Well I gotta get in deeper or I gotta get out. I gotta be my own boss."



Broken Point, 2015. P-1000-8-211.



Broken Point. P-1001-03-5.

AG: Was that the motivation for you or what else were you thinking about, buying the site [...]?

TM: Yeah, that's kind of the big thing [...] if you're that personality type. You want to say [...] do you want to be your own boss, you want to make your own decisions, or you want somebody else to make decisions for you. And it's, you know, it's a job. It's a way to make income. At some point you have the skill set to do it, hopefully.

AG: What skills are required to run a site versus be a crew?

TM: Well, right. I mean being able to keep your machinery running is pretty critical, but just managing your time, your energy resources, fixing stuff. It's all about fixing stuff, you know. We don't necessarily have brand new things laying around to just get new, so keep stuff going. And then you start to learn, okay, yeah, I gotta like keep crew going and make sure they're okay, and hopefully they don't step on nails, that kind of thing.

AG: Describe Broken Point when you first arrived?

TM: A lot of stairs. That's the first thing that hits everybody. A lot of stairs. And you know, [...] it's a little bit different vibe at each site 'cause here we're up high, we look out into the bay from the kitchen window, we can see inside the bay from the kitchen table, we can see out into the Shelikoff. [...] And so then the other thing is there's a lot of structure here. There's a lot of stairs so you don't just like walk out the door and boom you're on the beach, you know, like most sites are, so that sort of changes the feel of it, but neither better nor worse. The stairs keep us in shape certainly, every stick of butter, everything, everything has to be carried up. So until my knees go

out, my body fails me, that's what I'll do. Then I'll work on engineering some kind of thing.

AG: Pulley system.

TM: Pulley tram-slide, yeah something.

AG: [...] I'm really interested in knowing how has the site changed though since Don, maybe when you first arrived, versus now?

TM: Well, in 2010, fall of 2009, there was a huge rain. Massive. There was landslides all over the island. And so part of this hillside, where all the stairs are, half of it washed out. And so I knew about it. And I went tanner fishing with Chris Berns and Shawna Rittenhouse, and then I was going to go come out here and save the place, like build some kind of berm to keep the remaining soil where it was. I didn't really have a good plan, but it was January after we got done fishing, and Shawna goes, "You really don't want to go out there. It's not going to be nice. It's not going to be good." So I didn't go. So in April, our friend Perry Nelson was out here bear hunting and he goes, "Dude, you have to get out here ASAP. Your cabin is about to slide down the hill. The rest of the earth slid out." So came out here with Perry in late April and in four days we took apart the cabin, which was bridging this chasm. We took apart this entire cabin nail for nail, screw for screw, everything, not just like bashed it apart, and cut the walls into eight-foot chunks and moved them, carried [...] everything up the hill. Everything inside the cabin went in the crew cabin and we lived like in a warren, like you know, like some kind of pack animal that just keeps stuffing and stuffing stuff in there 'cause this is like, you know, eighteen by thirty-two. Right? So [...] there's a fair amount of stuff. The crew cabin is even smaller. So in that sense rebuilding this place is changed 'cause now we're higher, there's more stairs.

AG: Where was it before?

TM: Well, kind of where the pit is and where those rock cages are right across from the smoker. So that kind of took, I would like to say two years, but we're still rebuilding. And the other thing was [...] that first summer when we're rebuilding, we rebuilt the cabin, my brother, Ilkke, and Mark Little and I. And Mark Little is fishing for Chris Berns. And we were closed because it was the starvation years, and [...] Mark Little goes, "Okay. I[...] Where is the first piling going?" So we just picked a spot, looked like we were going to fit it in, and we just dug that first piling and built from there. And then the second half of the summer was moving the nineteen tons of rock into the gabion baskets. [...] Is it nineteen or twenty-nine, I don't know, something like that.

AG: How did you accomplish that?

TM: Well, we started hauling rock. Well first, I ordered gabion baskets, three by three by three, from Florida. PVC coated, will outlast this cabin in eternity. So then we started filling the rocks by hand, but that was just going too slow, so my friend, Jamin Price Hall, is here, and he goes, "We need to build a slide," and I go, "Okay, do it. Whatever you want to do, do it." So he built this slide and we used a pulley with an old running line out to a skiff and a box. And the box we filled with rocks. Pulled it up with a skiff in the water and unloaded it. And had lots of people coming through and wasn't just done in one chunk. It was throughout the second half of that summer. So that was a lot of work.

AG: And what's the purpose?

TM: To keep the rest of the hillside above it from sliding out.

AG: Do you know if there had been any other catastrophic landslides before?

TM: Well, not here. Trap Six had their cabin totally taken out by a snow landslide. You can ask them about it.

CB: He actually had it floating around in the bay.

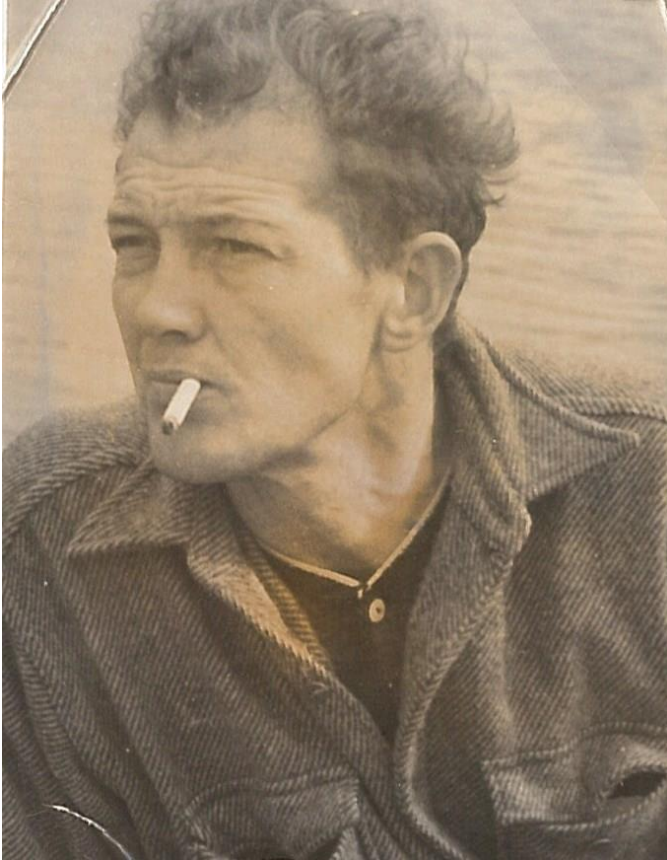
TM: Yeah, somebody goes, "Hey, there's a roof over here." That's a whole other story. So they didn't rebuild in the same spot. They rebuilt somewhere else.

AG: When you were here, was the crew cabin in the same spot? Was it pretty much the same layout?

TM: Yeah, so that's the same. There weren't any stairs to the crew cabin. It was just these two planks that Don had, and they were very slippery when wet, and so you'd kind of slide down. And so I wasn't too happy about that, so, or I just wanted to do something about it, so I made like log stairs, kind of, and now they're to the point where they need to be rebuilt again [...]. So I moved this site a little closer to the cabin, you know, just trying out different spots.

AG: And how many nets do you have?

TM: I have one net, one permit. Last summer and this summer we were fishing Bob Allen's permit on a medical transfer. And that's more towards the point where he used a fishing net. I don't know



Slim Trueman. P-962-74.

what years those were, like the '90s. [...] I don't think it was the '80s. It was the '90s.

AG: And what was the year that you purchased Broken Point?

TM: 2007.

AG: What do you know of the people that came before you and before Don?

TM: Well, I know that Tony Howard had this place before Don, and Tony liked to say Broken Point was bankers' hours fishing. It was nine to five or something like that, but Don also has said, like you know, Tony had a more relaxed way of fishing. I don't know Tony, but I don't know much about him. I do know that Slim had Broken Point. Slim Trueman, and he had a bunch of the sites, right? I was told that this was his favorite site. I don't know if that's true or not.

AG: Why might that have been the case?

TM: I don't know. [...] I mean, so Miners Point is a great site. So there's a lot of great sites. Miners Point, in comparison, it's way more exposed out there, and so we're protected from like west winds and stuff.

No, I don't know. I don't know why [...]. I was told [...] that he had a suspended cabin. [...] Don built all the stairs in the cabin up, right? Everybody else had lived on the beach on tents and a



Broken Point when Slim Trueman operated the site, ca. 1965. P-962-72.

suspended cabin apparently, but on big storms, like you get a twenty-two foot tide with a northeast thirty-five or forty, then you know it's going to wash water all the way up to the cliff. And then your stuff is in trouble and stuff's getting washed around or away. And we've done that before, where your water is still coming up higher and higher and we're scrambling.

AG: Do you know how it got its name?

TM: Well, the geographical point is Broken Point. How that came to be I don't know. That's a cartographers map make—. It's like Broken Point, East Point. Miners? Maybe there was actually mining. [...] I'm not really sure. I decided it was Broken Point before I was here so why change the name.

AG: And is it patented land?

TM: It is. There was a fish trap here, so that's why it's private land [...]. I haven't done any of the back tracking on that, but apparently there was a fish trap here.

AG: Do you think the fish trap is pretty much where you have your set today?

TM: I think it's pretty close, yeah.



Monson's cabin at Broken Point in September, 2015. P-1008-202.

AG: Yeah.

TM: Because you know my understanding is the private land went along with like the watchman's shack or something.

AG: Oh okay. [...] What's your annual cycle look like?

TM: Cycle?

AG: Just from year to year [...]. You're here in the summers. What's the year in the life of Tollef?

TM: Well, it used to be mushing, right? And then from there [...] it just really depends on how much income we can produce, how much we catch, how much we make. If I make enough and make all my payments good and everything, then I can take the year off and go travel. Otherwise, I'll get on a fishing boat and fish and make enough income to go do whatever. It's not really too fixed.

AG: So no more mushing?

TM: No, I don't know where I got all the energy to do all that 'cause working three hundred forty days out of the year is pretty much you're a robot at some point. Like May, you're just a robot. I can talk to you and interact with you, but yeah. [...] I don't know. Who knows. Never say never, I guess.

AG: Where do you live in the winter?



The site of the Sandvik and West Point Packing Co in Village Islands, P-1000-6-153.

TM: Well, that's a good question. People ask me that and it's hard to say when you're kind of transient, but I do have a little house in Village Islands. So there's a little, the old Sandvik cannery, I don't know if you know where that is. [...] There's the survey from 1934. So my friend, Perry, and I just bought that a couple weeks ago, and then—

AG: Congratulations.

TM: And then my private, my little house is on a different piece right attached to that, so I could live there. I mean, I'm still building it you know, [...] but I'm not really all that keen on living out here year round. There's not enough going on to like keep me busy.

AG: Have you fished for Ocean Beauty the whole time that you've been out here?

TM: Nope, this is the first year I've gone back to them. When I fished for Dave we fished for Ocean Beauty, and then Don we fished for one year for Ocean Beauty, and then we switched to Island Seafood's when they started up.

AG: And how would you characterize your relationship with the cannery?

TM: Well, I mean [...] it's a business deal where they're sending out a tender for X amount of money hoping to make good on their, you know, investment. [...] I don't know, it's hard to say. Maybe things have sort of changed because when you have a long time manager like Tim Blott [...] or when we had Uganik cannery, that was the last year that cannery worked or ran was my first year. So I got to see a little bit of an insight there and so that was a different thing than the town side, but when you have long time managers they get to know their fishermen and, you know, there's more compassion. 'Cause like what happened last year, it's like Pacific Seafoods brought in new

management and they just kind of looked at Uganik and said, “Nope, sorry, [...]we don't want you anymore.” It's like okay well that's their business call.

AG: Why do you think they made that decision?

TM: I think they're crunching numbers pretty hard and to me it looks like—. Well I know for a fact that their plant's too small. [...] They don't have enough processing capacity to deal with any amount of fish. So if they are buying fish, they can't process fast enough, it's leading to like poor quality and losses. No profit margin for them so. Yeah, I thought that they would expand their plant, but you know that hasn't happened yet.

AG: [...] Were you able to notice kind of a change? That first year you were out here, Uganik cannery was still operating, and then since then there hasn't been a cannery in the bay that's been operating. Were you able to really sense any sort of difference out here because of that?

TM: Well, you know it's hard for me to say, but I hear like all the older owners they always talk really fondly about the cannery like we go in for ice cream, you go in to do laundry, you go in to get a shower.

CB: Steak night.

TM: You get like steak night, mug up, whatever, and so that kind of like community center is gone, but at least for Uganik here our community has remained really tight. Like in just my humble opinion, I think our bay is a little bit different than maybe Viekoda or Uyak. Like I don't know what their relationships are like, but I know ours are all like somebody breaks down, somebody needs a dash of salt, somebody is always on their radio to chip in, and so you know that's nice. [...] It's like any place, right, where you're living out in a really beautiful place, but it's about the people anywhere you go, but we're a pretty tight community in Uganik.

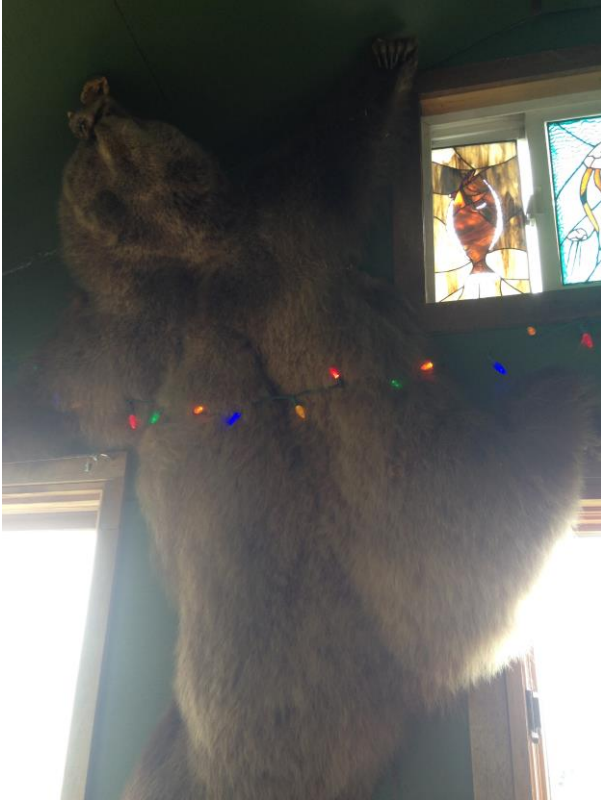
AG: How do you hire your crew?

TM: That's a good question. A lot of time it's word of mouth. That's the main one and then [...] if that doesn't happen then you fall back on the internet. There's like a bajillion people out there who've seen The Deadliest Catch and think they're going to, you know, get rich or [...] whatever. But it's like, no, it's not necessarily what's happening. [...] There isn't like heavy guitar bass line, pumped up music, it's just we're really just going out there day after day, living our lives, sometimes very boring, very boring work, but.

AG: What sustains you?

TM: Well, like I said, I think a lot of the people that I see getting into the fishery and staying around are, you know, our friends are all here. We're all really good friends and so I think people is like the main glue. The income is certainly part of it, but when you fish through bad years and, you know, people keep sticking around, that's when you start to like see why people are here. 'Cause if you're just here for the money, then the bad years, why would you stick around? So yeah, I mean the lay of the land, the ability to eat fresh fish, make your own bread, you know, crab, berries, pies, all this fresh good stuff, open space to breath in.

AG: What's the story with that bear?



Bear at Broken Point cabin wall. P-1001-03-7.

TM: [...] I don't know for a fact, but [...] that was probably one of the only bears taken with the dog team, I would guess sort of in the state 'cause nobody hunts with dog team, you know. It's not easy. It's not something normal people do. But we would train in the fall time with no snow and dog sleds and just training, but we're also hunting at the same time. And the whole western Arctic caribou herd goes through there, so it's 750,000 animals can pour through there. So I've come over a rise where you look out onto the big tundra flats and it's solid moving animals. Like I don't even know how many, a hundred thousand. They'd stretched off into the horizon like big long chains of them and then going off into the southern horizon on the big migration push. So that year there was no caribou around. I found this bear eating blueberries out in the tundra. So I hooked the team down, and you have to be careful with that because the dogs will be like, "Oh, hunting," and they want to pop the hook and go chase it, leaving you stranded, so you've gotta be pretty on that. But I harvested the bear, took her home. The toy beagle got her hair all in her ruff. She thought it was still alive perhaps and needed to be battled, but we ate it from nose to tail.

It was delicious because she had been eating cranberries and blueberries, low bush, out on the tundra.

AG: So do you feel that being a commercial fishermen in anyway has influenced your politics?

TM: Well I guess there's always [...] like your sort of self-interest, like [...] you want to have laws and stuff go through that, will help perpetually at what you're doing, and but [...] my fishing and politics [...] to me they're not intertwined. I'm not a very political person so that's also part of it.

AG: And since you're on patented land then you don't really have a lot of interactions with the [Kodiak National Wildlife] Refuge, huh?

TM: No. I mean I understand how it all works, but like it's kind of ridiculous. Like chickens, it's a part of like rural life as far as I can tell and people can't have them out here. What are chickens going to escape and like breed and explode in a population? Like, you know, I guess they don't want bears to come in and have interactions with people, but I have never had any problems with chickens, knock on wood, [...] and bears, so I don't know.

AG: So now it's been, you know, twelve years that you've been fishing out in the west side?

TM: Fifteen.

AG: Okay, fifteen years.

TM: That doesn't matter, same thing. It becomes a blur at some point.

AG: What are some kind of marking points or some major events that you remember from the last fifteen years?

TM: The landslide was a big one. The starvation years were, also. You gotta dig deep on those. You're hurting.

AG: Which years were those?

TM: Well, I mean roughly, as like.

CB: Eight to eleven.

TM: Yeah well, even twelve was not good at all for me, so the last two years have turned around and now we're back into not healthy fishing June. June is where we make, you know, our money typically, but I'm fishing till they quit buying, so whatever goes by.

AG: Any other major events or occurrences?

TM: Well, the big humpy years are kind of notable 'cause, at least for me, we don't get a lot of humpy years on this side of the bay. So the days when you're putting in twenty-five thousand pounds with three people, that's a big deal. That's a lot of work so I remember those days for sure.

AG: What about changes in the way that you handle fish?

TM: Definitely. Like that first year when Uganik cannery was operating, they would pick up fish twice a day 'cause nobody refrigerated theirs. No ice, just wet burlap bags in the bottom of the skiff and then they started saying, "Oh [...] everybody's gotta have insulated totes," and they're like, "Insulated totes? What?" And it's like, "No yeah you have to. [...]" This is like a big deal. Gotta have quality. And so now I think everybody's producing pretty good quality fish, ice. And I don't know how efficient that is, but I have an RSW barge, and it doesn't make sense to run a diesel engine, chill a bunch of water for seven fish. A little dap of ice will chill them more efficiently at this point.

AG: Have you always had the barge?

TM: Don had it built in 2004, and then before that we had a funky aluminum 1977 type of thing.

AG: What sort of incentive was there to create such a thing?

TM: You know, I don't know because as far as I know nobody spent like eighty thousand dollars on their barge. You know, that's a kind of a rare thing so you'd have to ask Don that, and you can, and he'd be happy to tell you.

AG: So was there any advantage though to having the RSW?

TM: Oh yeah, I mean in the few times where you do get a lot of humpies that's where RSW makes sense. Like a lot of the pink sites have RSW because you can chill a lot of fish, you can take care of the quality. Ice, you can't even like get ice in between all the fish, so it's, you know, when you can circulate chilled water through it, it's a very high quality product.

AG: Well, is there anything else that you would like to share? I'm sure I didn't exhaust the veins of questions, but.

TM: Well, just kind of going back briefly as when fishing isn't necessarily a job. Like, you know, I fished on boats, I haven't seined, but [..] for me out here [...], when a job isn't a job, when it's sort of like your passion, then it isn't a job. So it's like, wow, I'm getting paid to do this? That's when you know it's something is clicked and that can be different for everybody.

AG: And that's how you feel?

TM: Yeah, yep.

AG: Anything else?

TM: Nope, but we do have to check the net.

AG: Well thank you.

TM: Thank you.



Ilkke Monson, left, and Tollef Monson, right, 2015 at Broken Point. P-1000-8-201.