Jeanne Shepherd

Transcript of an Oral History
Conducted by
Anjuli Grantham
at
Uganik Bay, Alaska
On June 20, 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.

This project is made possible due to the contributions of project partners and sponsors, including the Alaska Historical Society, Alaska Humanities Forum, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Kodiak Maritime Museum, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, Kodiak Public Broadcasting, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, and Salmon Project.

Note on Transcription

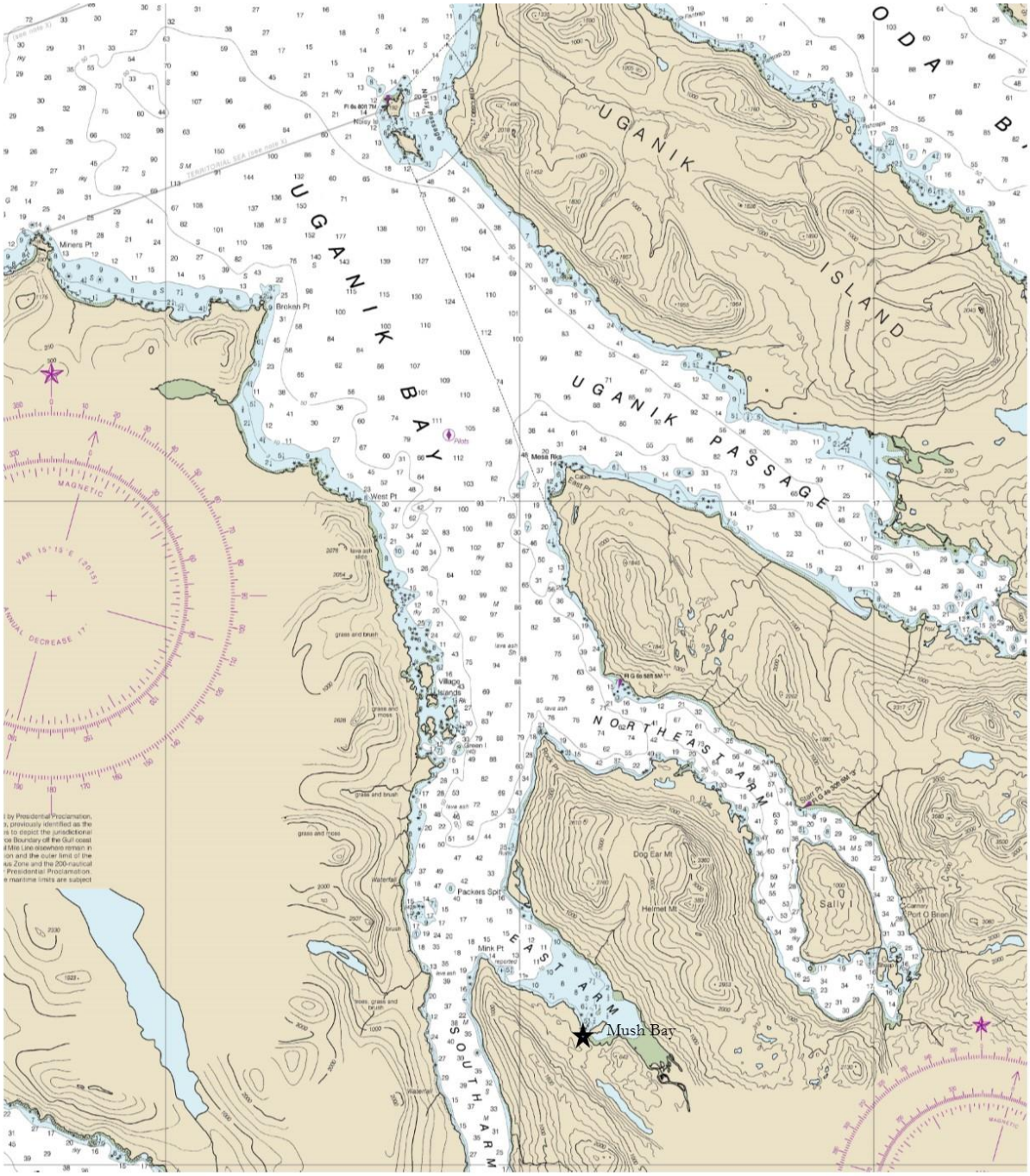
After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The following transcript is nearly a word-for-word transcription of the oral history interview. Editing is intended to make the interview 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

Jeanne Shepherd, interview P-1002-8, by Anjuli Grantham in Mush Bay, Alaska, 20 June 2015, (Kodiak, Alaska: Kodiak Historical Society).

Key Words: Uganik Bay, Mush Bay, subsistence, commercial fishing

Cover photo: Jeanne Shepherd at Mush Bay on June 20, 2015. Photographed by Breanna Peterson for West Side Stories. P-1000-8-90.



Mush Bay's location within Uganik Bay.

Oral History of Jeanne Shepherd

AG: So it is June 20, 2015, and I am at Mush Bay with Jeanne Shepherd. This is Anjuli Grantham and this interview is for the West Side Stories project. So Jeanne, let's start from the beginning. When and where were you born?

JS: Born. I was born in Seattle in when? I just turned the big 6-0, so I was born in 1955, Seattle, January 17. Born and raised in Seattle and left there several times, but when I left for Kodiak, I left for good.

AG: And when was that?

JS: June 2, 1978, and as soon as I arrived in Kodiak I knew I was home. I never went back except to visit.

AG: So what sort of early experiences in life might have inspired you to come to Alaska? Did you have any sort of connection before?

JS: Well, my most fun times growing up was camping […]. We went to Canada a lot, British Columbia and I lived for being out in the woods. […] Seattle is a kind of a great place. It's two hours away from anything, the Sound, the mountains on either side, Canada. You could be somewhere in two hours doing something fun.

AG: And what is it that brought you to Alaska then?

JS: I came to work for the summer, but my very first day I knew I wasn't going home. It was very fun, wild, a little bit crazy. […] Kodiak was crazy in 1978, and I had never experienced such a thing. I was twenty-three years old and it was, honestly, I bet the only place, well besides like Dutch Harbor and other places as crazy, that you could walk around and find hundred dollar bills on the ground.

AG: And did you?

JS: I still don't look up when I walk. I look down. Yes, plenty. Plenty. […] But I dug clams and sold them for fifty cents a pound. My girlfriend and I would take a skiff out to Middle Bay, dig eight hundred pounds, come in with four hundred dollars and each of us got two hundred bucks for three hours of work. Delivered them to the cannery for particular Dungeness boats, and you could do that for so many days out of the month. And cash, where else could you do something like that? Taking weights for boats in the wintertime, crab boats. They hand you hundred dollar bills for doing things like that. I don't know, it was just different, you know. It was a little bit towards the end of those big fisheries that made everybody wild and crazy and made everybody a lot of money.

AG: So what was this job that you came up for?

JS: Oh just working in a cannery. Cannery job.

AG: And did you do that?

JS: I did. I had a brand new Volkswagen camper in 1977 and I came up here to get it paid off, and instead, I turned around and went down and got it and brought it back up here and lived out of it, and shortly afterwards I traded it for a fishing boat. [On my first day in Kodiak I got a flat tire and cracked windshield. I knew my new van was doomed.]

AG: Which cannery did you work at?

JS: Pacific Pearl.

AG: And what was your experience that summer?

JS: I decided that working in the cannery was not for me and that fishing sounded a lot more fun, being out, getting out, so I did. And that just brought me further around Kodiak Island and everyplace a little bit further that I went the more beautiful it was. I'd heard about Uganik Bay and Packer Spit, crazy Packer Spit, and when I turned the corner out there at the Spit and looked in, it was paradise. I mean, it was paradise. Then I ran across this house and I knew of Mary Jacobs. I didn't really know her. I found this little house here completely abandoned and kind of a big mess. We were fishing halibut at the time and halibut was two weeks on and two weeks off, so we fished the two weeks and then left, delivered the fish and came back out here for our two weeks off. There was a smoker here, […] the gardens were all unattended, the front door wasn't even closed. The shop door, that was like a trifold door, was blown off and on the beach. […] It had a very abandoned feel, so […] we put the gillnet out and caught some salmon and hung them in the smoker, and I puttered around in the garden. We didn't live on shore. We lived on the boat and I puttered in the garden. But one day I picked a bunch of rhubarb that was all big flower stalks and went in the kitchen and baked a rhubarb crisp trying to clean up the rhubarb patch. Shortly after that when I came to shore to check the smoker, Mary pulled in right behind me in the skiff and terrified me. And anyway we visited for a minute. I mean, I felt like I was a burglar or something. And here I've got smoke coming out of her smoker, and I invited her in for a rhubarb crisp to her own house. And she was delighted and she said she was glad that somebody was here keeping an eye on the place and yes she would love some crisp. She came on in, into her own house and she said, "Oh, by the way, it's available." So that is how I ended up here.

AG: What year was that?

JS: That was'80. I moved out here in April of '81. […]

AG: Who are some of the first people that you met when you're in town?

JS: Pam Suppe. You know Pam? Stig Yngvy? Yeah, Pam Ingvy. […] We palled around a lot and Jane Williams and Wendy Beck. Wendy up there in Village Islands. […]

AG: What did you know about the character of people in Kodiak at that time?

JS: Pretty much everybody that I knew lived in a boat or a trailer or a pickup truck. I didn't know anybody that had a house. You don't have to write this down, but I'd brush my teeth at the BNB Bar in the morning and have a cup of coffee. […] Since we all didn't really have a home or a living room to congregate in we congregated at the B&B Bar […]. Everybody was a little bit independent, a little different. We didn't work nine to five and […] we were opportunists […] just looked for opportunities. And a lot of us fished which was pretty exciting.

AG: Tell me about that first fishing job?

JS: Well, […] I was raised to work nine to five so I felt […] maybe a little unsettled here to begin with like I'm not supposed to be doing this. This is fun and I'm supposed to be working for a living. My first fishing trip, let's see. What was the first one? My first fishing kind of adventures were the clam digging and […] then we were halibut fishing and seems like every fishing trip I went on we came back probably owing more money than we made fishing because we'd break down and get towed or some little disaster would happen. Jane and I, Jane Williams, we fished halibut out of a skiff for a lot of those two weeks on and off fisheries and we did okay. We did pretty good pulling by hand. […]

AG: And you said you bought a boat?

JS: Traded it for my Volkswagen camper.

AG: And what was this boat?

JS: It was Jerry Laktonen's boat that had been sitting in the boat harbor. It was called the *Auk,* a wooden forty-foot, built by the Navy. It was actually a good, sturdy old boat, but it had a broke down engine. Instead of having put a new engine in it, we just rebuilt the engine that was in it and we never really made any money. […] In the meantime, I run across Mush Bay and I said […] see you later to the boat, and I got off here. And then I had a little Bristol Bay double-ender and a hundred Dungeness pots, so I fished right here [in Mush Bay]. Still fished halibut, still pulled by hand. Well, then with the little double ender I had hydraulics.

AG: Who'd you sell the crabs to?

Mush Bay, P-776-50.

JS: I sold the crabs to […] some cannery in town. I don't remember which one, but also to the mess hall at the cannery, Uganik cannery. And the Filipinos at the end of the season, they would buy all that you could give them for taking home, so I had my own little market over there.

AG: And so when you keep on saying we, who is we?

JS: Oh I was in the fishing boat with two other people.

[…]

AG: And so what was it to late '70s, early '80s, what was it like to be a woman in the fishing industry at that time? Was it uncommon? Was it common? Were there challenges associated with that?

JS: It was probably kind of the early stages. Mary fished and had her all female crew, but mostly there wasn't a lot of women fishing. And challenges, yeah, there's always challenges. You have to prove yourself for one, so I think that always makes women harder workers because you're always trying to prove yourself, so yeah.

AG: But you figured it was a career for you?

JS: For awhile. Yeah and then I gillnetted [salmon] with other people here in the bay, but […] I honestly never wanted my own permit. I don't know why, but I didn't. Wasn't interested because I like doing this, living in Mush Bay which is more of a subsistence lifestyle. I mean, you have to come up with some money to get by, but I would rather have less money and live like this because you know you work all summer and then the money you make you end up having to go to the store to buy food with where if you just are here getting to put up your own food—, that's the route I wanted to do.

AG: So Mary tells you it's for sale and you're an eager buyer.

JS: Without any money.

AG: So how did that take place?

JS: Well, I don't know. I just I gave her little bits of money at a time, and eventually got it. She wasn't in a hurry.

AG: How long did she have this place for?

JS: Nine years. The house was built in 1922, and Margaret Peterson in Anchorage, her father [Halvden Sverry Danielson] left Norway at nineteen years old, sailed all the way around the world and ended up here. That says something to me, and so he ended up here and built this place. He actually built a place outside of Ouzinkie first. And they had three kids. All three of them got diphtheria. Two of them died and [my 95 year old friend in Anchorage] Margaret survived. She said she was too ornery to die. […] I don't know how long they lived outside of Ouzinkie. I think Pineapple Cove is where he built. Then they moved here and he built the saltery and the house. And Katie Rogers, Margaret's mom, well she was Katie Danielson when she lived here, and she says they put up four thousand pink salmon a day in the saltery. [...] She tells me this and then Margaret would say, "Oh no, she didn't do that," but her mom always said that she did put up four thousand a day. There was four boats that fished here and it was also in the trap days, the fish trap days, so four seiners fished here and they let him make the first set since it was right in front of his house. And she said they split and soaked or brined four thousand fish a day and then she would also then have to pull yesterday's four thousand out of the brine and salt them, and so that was at the saltery right over there. I have pictures of it. And so the house was built then. It didn't look like this. And there was another little house out further and a smoker that held I guess a lot of fish. […] They lived here for twenty-five years and then they sold the place to Deedie's [Pearson] father and family, and they lived here for twenty-five years. So that would've been '22 to '45 or so. Did Deedie say when they moved out here?

AG: I think it was like […] '48, '49.

JS: [Yes]. And then John and Mary came along. I think actually Bill Backus owned it for a very short time, and I don't think they ever really lived here […], but I don't know that for sure. […] And then John and Mary were here for nine years. Balika was born on the living room floor. And then I came along. John Finley had a farm in Montana, so they ended up going back to the farm for at least part of the year and then coming here in the summertime. But initially, they lived here year round and fished.

AG: Do you know why the fishing marker is on Packer Spit. Do you have any sense of when it became that this was off limits for fishing?

JS: Well, when I first got here the marker was at what we call Dago Creek across the way and Mission Beach which was also called Smith Beach when Deedie lived here. She likes correct me all the time. This is how names get mixed up […] somewhere along the line. […] By the time I got here we were calling it Mission Beach. So that's where the markers were when I first got here, but only sometimes, not always, did they open it up so far. […]. I don't know how many fish there were in the bay in the '20s compared to now, but as far as I'm concerned right now it should not even be opened at Packer Spit because we're not letting any fish go up the river, this river. We're paying a lot of attention to Karluk which we always do, but nothing to here and I mean I had the gillnet a good long while the other day and I caught one fish and this is almost July. So I'm a little concerned about our fish.

AG: Is that something that you've seen change significantly over the years?

JS: Yeah. We don't have a lot of fish in here. Last year we hardly had any pink salmon up the river and then the river flooded in September, so I'll bet you next year we don't have any pink salmon in the river. […]

[…]

AG: […] So tell me about your first couple of years out here?

JS: They were challenging. […] I've kept a journal ever since I've lived here and […] my old journals are much more interesting than the new ones because everything was a challenge. Everything was very rough. The [biggest tides of the year] used to come in my house. […] [John and Mary] drilled holes in the floor to let the water out and put wine corks in them. Well guess where the water comes in first, too? (*chuckle*) Through the holes in the floor. But anyway, the house has been jacked up three feet, in the meantime, with new piling, and it doesn't come in anymore and that's convenient. So Al and Hazel, Deedie's parents, came over. They were living in Village Islands when I moved out here and they came for Thanksgiving dinner one Thanksgiving. And they were elderly. […] They were a lot older than we were and they brought their slippers along so they put their slippers on, and just as the turkey was coming out of the oven the tide started coming in. And so we picked up the rugs and Hazel says, "I think I'll put my boots back on now," and we all put our boots on and there was four of us here for dinner and Lock Finley had always carved me a little wooden boat every time he'd been here, so my windowsill had, I don't know, five little wooden boats on the windowsill. So he we got the wooden little boats out and sailed them around on the living room floor after we picked the rugs up and Hazel says, "Give me the mop," and I said, "Why don't we wait till the tide turns?" And so we did and then mopped the floor up and ate turkey dinner and it couldn't have been more perfect company to do that with because they used to live here, and not that the tide came in while they lived here. After the tidal wave is when the tide would come in, well, at some point. I don't really know for certain, but you know that was '64. Did John and Mary live with the tide coming in the house for that long? Hm, anyway, I guess maybe they did, but they were braver than me. I don't know. It already feels like you're on a boat at high tide when you're in the kitchen. But that was something I wanted to tend to when I first got here was [jacking the house up].

AG: How long did it take you to jack up the structure?

Shepherd's cabin before the remodel, Mush Bay. P-1000-8-121.

Shepherd's house, 2015, Mush Bay. P-1000-8-126.

JS: […] Everything that I do here is salvage work […]. The reason I came here in the first place I heard that there was a barge for sale, and I knew I could never afford to live remote like this. […] There's not that many pieces of land anyway and I didn't have any money, but it would've been a house boat and a barge, so I came to check the barge out and that's why I came here initially. And the barge didn't float, and yeah, that was gonna be a tough one, but you know then Mary says it's available and that was very convenient so the barge—I forgot where I was going with that.

AG: Salvaging.

JS: Oh. So we tore this barge apart for lumber for jacking it up plus old trap pilings were out in the swamp out there that were in pretty good shape still. They were eighty feet long and we kind of squared them up, cut the edges off. I had a boyfriend at the time [Dave, whom I later married but it didn't take] and he worked over at the cannery. Beach gang could do all that kind of work. And so we rolled those out, floated them down with the tide. It took winters, a couple of years of preparation getting materials ready and then once we started on it I actually went gillnetting for the summer and he did it all by himself here. I do believe Coyote helped him stand the first piling up and the rest of 'em he did himself. I think there's thirty-two pilings under there […].

Pilings under the house. P-1000-8-104.

And so you had to work with the tide as soon as the tide did not touch the front row of piling anymore. […] You had to jack the house up. I mean he jacked it up, jacked the whole thing up, and cribbed it up with all this barge lumber and lumber salvage from the cannery. […] The jacks were like this tall. Three feet high screw jacks and all borrowed from the cannery and whoever had one to loan, and I think he had twenty-two jacks under the house and every time he'd get it up another inch he'd slide more blocking in to crib it up and then of course he had to work on it the weeks that the tide didn't come up under the house and so that meant he had to get a move on and get it done. We had goats at the time and the goats were under the house helping him. He'd get one end of a timber up and the goats would like start working on it […] I had a goat pen. I don't know why he wouldn't stick them in the pen, but he liked to get aggravated I think. (*chuckle*) […] I don't know why he didn't lock 'em up, but I have pictures of him being so angry at goats that it was just a little bit humorous.

AG: And so your house kind of was teetering for awhile?

JS: Well no, it was always very stable. It was blocked up with cribbing; it wasn't going anywhere. Yeah, it was quite the project and then he got all the piling in. I mean you jack something like that up, the house is not that big, but you jack it up and I thought maybe the doors weren't gonna fit. They were gonna scrape on the floor. I mean they already did scrape on the floor, so actually he got it quite leveled up so they didn't scrape on the floor anymore. No windows broke. I would think something might go wrong, but it didn't. It went quite well and tide doesn't come in anymore.

AG: And you came in from the end of the season to have a—?

JS: Well, I came in pretty regularly to make sure all was well. Ken [Reinke] fished on a boat at the time and he came by where I was fishing at Gull Light and he said, "Have you been home lately?" And I said, "No what?" And that's all he said. So I dashed home thinking I was gonna see Dave's feet sticking out from under the house or something, but everything was fine. That was just Ken being Ken. And a lot of progress, you know, got the house jacked up.

AG: So did you immediately start putting in gardens or restoring previous gardens?

Gardens, Mush Bay, 2015. P-1000-8-82.

JS: Restoring. They were here.

AG: Who had put them in?

JS: Well, Katie Danielson way back when mostly and John and Mary probably. You know, there's several gardens around, and I don't know who put what, but I know the main garden here was Katie Danielson. It was all organic. They use to haul seaweed and starfish and bury fish, and I do the same except for the buried fish anymore. There's a lot more bears now than there used to be so can't bury fish anymore. And yeah, my soils pretty good.

AG: After almost a hundred years now.

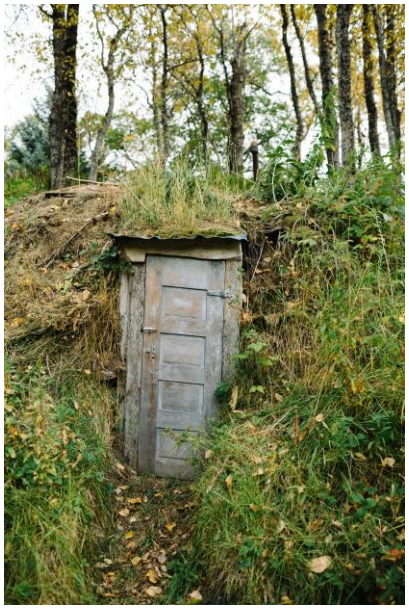
JS: Yeah.

AG: Organic compost, huh?

JS: Yes

AG: So. The methods are similar. How about the crops? Do you think that you grow similar?

Shepherd's green house. P-1000-8-92.



Root Cellar. P-1000-8-101.

JS: Probably pretty much. A lot of potatoes and onions and root crops for winter […] I've got a lot of greens, but I like to be able to put stuff up for winter.

AG: So what does that usually— Is that potatoes?

JS: Onions, carrots, rutabagas, turnips, beets, cabbage [chard. Kale can be eaten quite late into the winter.]

AG: Did you do a lot of this work when you were a kid? Did you have a big garden?

JS: We had a big garden in the city. […] I always felt like we were probably poverty stricken because I ate homemade bread when all my friends were eating Wonder Bread and Hostess Twinkies. […] We got banana bread. We got chocolate chip cookies with raisins not chocolate chips. I felt deprived. And a big garden, so we ate out of the garden. […] It was like the '50s and '60s. […] It was that industrial food age, all the new and convenient and wonderfully awful food that was created at that time. I didn't know I was a lucky one. [My folks were organic before we knew what organic was.]

AG: So was it then out of necessity or gardening out here living this more organic lifestyle? Was it an alternative lifestyle choice at the time?

JS: Yeah. Well, I always, even growing up in Seattle, I wanted to be self-sufficient. When I was a little kid and people would ask you what you wanted to be when you grow up, I hated that question because boys got to do all the fun things and girls got to be moms or nurses or teachers. […] So I said I wanted to be a hermit when I grow up. That is what I used to say to kind of shut people up from asking that question. […] And that's what happened except I'm not really a hermit. [Turns out I'm really quite sociable.]

AG: Evidenced by the fact that now an airplane has arrived.

JS: Right. Yep. So.

AG: Shall we pause?

JS: It will take him a minute to get situated. Yeah.

AG: I was hoping that maybe you can describe some of you neighbors when you first came out here?

JS: Coyote. Well, Coyote in the summertime and oh no, he was here a lot in the winter as well Daniel Boone Reed. […] Nan was still alive when I came out here, but she […] had cancer and not doing very well. The watchman at the cannery was Bob and Bernice Stull. They were quite fun. They were mom and dad kind of people. Well, Chief lived with Daniel Boone. Those guys argued all the time. Chief ended up coming down here and staying with me because he and Dan would drive each other crazy. Who else? Lindbergs. They were […] sometimes on the spit and sometimes on over at the herring plant. They weren't in Village Islands until later. Village Islands, let me think. Martha Chaliack. Ron Dunlap showed up a little bit later, married Martha, and Edson wasn't here until considerably later, and that was about it. I'm probably forgetting somebody.

AG: Could you maybe describe Daniel Boone Reed, his character, about his personality? Why was he in Village Islands?

JS: Oh, he was a homesteader. They had lots of animals, and he had goats and sheep and chickens. Well he has all those pens out on the island. I'm not sure if he didn't have something bigger like, did he have cows? I'm not sure about that. […] He'd come over here […] when my parents would come visit, he'd like sling a bag of rhubarb on the floor in front of my mom and expect pies. And then he'd always wanna like kiss my mom, you know (*kiss sound*), on the lips. My mom's like, "Ugh." My dad is right there and my mom did not like that at all. I mean Daniel Boone was a character. He [could be] considerate. I mean, he came over here once and he didn't think I had any food so he went home and boxed up all this food and brought me stuff because he thought I was going hungry. […] Seems like he helped me with a food co-op order once. He had to order like five hundred dollar minimum or something like that and he chipped in or helped me come up with enough to buy five hundred dollars' worth. So he was a good neighbor but he had peculiar ways [...]. Well, if you needed fish he would bring you fish. If I needed my mail to go out, because I always had a questionable outboard, he would come down here and get my mail, my outgoing mail, and then he'd bring my incoming mail. But he also read my mail. He would read my outgoing mail and I caught him on that because my letters would always arrive to people taped shut and mine would come to me tapped shut and I thought that was everybody has an afterthought and they have to cut the letter back open and I said, "Dan!" He goes, "The government reads all our mail anyway." Okay. Well, whatever, but he was peculiar. I think everybody's a little bit peculiar to live out here. […]

AG: Did you know Slim Trueman?

JS: Only barely.

AG: What do you remember of him?

JS: Slim. Well, Packers Spit in those days. You were there. It was wild and crazy place. I mean, I didn't know him well enough to say something in particular, but it was all part of that era of beach seining.

AG: Was it Coyote that first started beach seining out there? Do you know how that all started? Shall we stop?

JS: Sure.

AG: Okay.

AG: Back with Jeanne. Silent visitor Chris. So I was asking about the beach seining. Do you know how that all started out there? I mean, of course it's pretty perfect territory for beach seining just because […] it's a long sandy beach. Was it Coyote that really started that back up?

JS: Do you know about beach seining? History of beach seining? No. Dianne might […] know more about that. I mean, she beach seined with those guys so I don't honestly know 'cause they were all doing it when I got here and they had been doing it for sometime because when I came into Mush Bay for the first time, I already knew of Uganik from all the people that you would run into in town. Maya. Do you remember Maya? She was Native. I'm not sure from which village, but she spent time on Packers Spit. That might have been before your day, but anyway I know that they have been beach seining a long time before I got there and […] I would think that like Slim or somebody was beach seining maybe before Coyote. I don't know. […]

AG: […] When you first came out here were there a lot of people living on the Spit?

JS: All those people you named and yeah there was others, too. […] [There was Mick and Eddie McCrea and their families.] There was more. I can't think of names, but yeah there was a couple of people with kids.

AG: I remember one of the first times I went out there, there were just so many people, a lot of people.

JS: Lindbergs were there and Dave Lindberg beach seined. […] I mean beach seine permits […] seemed almost as prolific as well, not quite as gillnets, but you know there's not a lot of good beaches to do it off of. Mission Beach was one of them, but it wasn't always opened into there. And Packers Spit, of course, is just made for that.

AG: Yeah it's surprising to go by there now and there to be nothing happening.

JS: Yep. I kind of miss that because they were my neighbors in the summer time and they might have all been a little wild and crazy and sometimes dangerous when the Nickersons would come around […]. I'd stop by 'cause I fished at Gull Light and I'd swing by [on my way home]. We'd put our nets up for the closure and I'd come on home at midnight, one o'clock in the morning, broad daylight […]. And this one time, Mick McCrea, I loved Mick, he goes, "Get over here." And so I went on down to that end of the beach. […] He said the Nickersons were like wild that night and their skiff had gone dry on Packers Spit and they said, "You go dry. You know I'll show you to go dry." And they started shooting their boat! […] Mick got me out of there and up and out of the way and I'm just walking right into the middle of danger. Those guys were […] scary. I mean it wasn't just them. […] They're drinking and doing drugs and just dangerous, so I got out off up the beach and I stayed there until I didn't hear anymore shooting and I made a beeline for my skiff. I mean the tide is out. I've got to run and I went home. "This is scary." So I just remember that one particular night that was pretty—.

AG: […] Well, I remember there was like constantly drinking which is like wake up in the morning and open a Rainier, of course.

JS: And it was being delivered by the tenders. You delivered fish, you got beer. Yeah, until we had a few accidents and then you got ice cream. (*chuckle*)

AG: […] Do you know how Mick McCrea started coming out to the west side?

JS: Well, he and Coyote, I believe, went to school together in Montana, and his brother [Eddie McCrea], and I think there was others. […] Yeah there was a Montana contingent, and Mick and they were all from the same town in Montana.

AG: I'd be interesting to find out the origin of how Coyote and all of them started coming out to the Uganik. With Cliff I know, of course, because his dad was Slim and so he was out here.

JS: And where was Cliff from?

AG: Washington. Vancouver.

JS: Yeah, I can almost remember something about Coyote, but not—. Dianne's been out here a lot longer. She fished around with other people and she'll probably remember something more.

AG: So after you jacked up your house, what were some of the other first improvements you made out here?

JS: Well, let me think. [This place is a continuous work in progress.] I dug a pond, but that was down the line a ways. Just getting the gardens reclaimed from the wilderness. I mean like this shop was here when I arrived, but they were just that black Celotex walls which is like a kind of a fiberboard. […] The front was eaten through by a bear […]. Fortunately, there was cutting torches inside right where the bear ate through so he couldn't get past the cutting torches, but if he'd a bit through any other part of the wall he probably would've ended up inside the shop. I think there was a deer hanging at the time. We ripped off the whole upstairs of the house after it was jacked up and I put a whole new upstairs. Used to be peaked and you could only walk upright down the middle of the house, the middle of the upstairs. […] So we put a new upstairs on so it's tall and lots of light and insulated. The house wasn't insulated, so I spent a lot of time trying to insulate from underneath and everything and then siding the buildings and all these patios and there was not decking and there's a lawn now. That didn't used to be here. Green houses, gardens, all kind of leaning towards living here year round, trying to be comfortable and burn a little bit less wood, be warmer. The gardens for the subsistence lifestyle. I don't actually buy very many groceries out of the store between the gardens and venison and fish. I don't buy meat. I eat venison and fish and that's it.

AG: Did you have to go into town to find work sometimes after you moved out here year round?

JS: No, nope. I did not.

AG: So since 1982 you've been here year round?

JS: I was here year round for a lot of years and then the last, I don't know, four years maybe I have not been here in the winter time.

DS: Well, since I met you went for that period of your parents when you went to Seattle for a month.

JS: Right. A month or something like that.

AG; Traveling.

JS: Yeah. I helped take care of my folks when they were elderly, but not like I lived in Seattle. I'd just go down to help take care of them for periods. Little stretches.

Chief Asiksick. P-993-3.

AG: You mentioned Chief before. What was he like?

JS: Chief Asiksick. He was a very good wood worker. He was fairly quiet. He was an alcoholic, but he didn't always drink. I mean he would go on his binges, but Pam [Suppe Ingvy] you knew Pam, right? Pam once put up a couple of five gallon buckets of what kind of wine? I don't know. Something. Well, maybe it was salmonberry wine. […] She stayed here off and on in the beginning and she stayed here when Chief stayed here. […] Daniel Boone would like come down here with my mail and Chief would come with him, and then Chief would stay and Dan would go home. Then once Chief stayed for a little while he didn't go back up there. Well, he was […] a handyman guy. He didn't think I should be down here by myself so he would [stay and] help me do projects. I mean he cut the transom off of my Ophiem skiff and put a new transom on. So he was very handy. He was a boat builder of some sort. He built his little sleds, but he had these great big fat hands. He was a small guy, but he had these great big hands that if he was doing your dishes were very clumsy. […] I was down to two dishes and they were those Melmac dishes that couldn't break, and I think he did that so he wouldn't have to do the dishes. I mean, not that I was making him do them, but he broke everything. So I assumed he was clumsy, but he could do this really fine work with his sleds […]. If he swept my floor he would sweep it under the rugs, so there'd be like this hump under the rug. I'd feed my cat clams so I'd sit a clam on the floor for the cat and he'd know it's there and he'd walk by and go crrrr and step on it, then it gets swept under the rug. So I think he he tried to drive me crazy sometimes. But when Pam and he were here, Pam always liked to play the devil's advocate. So she'd pick the other side of the conversation and they would argue and I would leave the house. And I would sit up on the hill into dusk going, "I just wanna go home," but I didn't want to go home and listen to them arguing. […] At some point Pam went back to town and worked at the newspaper and Chief stayed here forever. He took a diamond cutter, it was something

that you can etch with, and he wrote his name, “Chief Chief,” on my window pane right where he sat at the table. And I was [angry]. I couldn't believe he had done that. But now I'm glad. Now I have this artifact of Chief. “Chief Chief” written on my window pane.

“Chief Chief.” P-1000-8-126.

AG: You couldn't kick him out, huh?

JS: Well, I tried a couple of times. Martha Chaliak up there in Village Islands, she would say, "Could you please bring Chief back?” He would cut her wood and things, do chores for her, but they would drink and fight and shoot at each other and be crazy and so he would beg me not to take him back up there. I'd come home from getting the mail and go, “Chief, you really need to go back there and help Martha. She needs you.” And he'd just beg me not to take him up there. But he liked it here because he was with Pam and me and we cooked for him. We didn't do his laundry or anything like that, but […] he liked it here. He was a handyman for a while and then he quit being a handyman. […] I would wait for a deer to walk as close to the shop porch as they could and I'll be standing on the other side of the building and get my deer and then I only have to put him up on the shop porch, and Chief would go, “That's not hunting.” “Have at it. You go get me one. Go get us one.” But he didn’t, so I would wait for the deer to get as close as it would and that was how I still like to get deer. I mean he was handy, pretty handy to begin with, and then he got less so. Maybe he didn't feel good. I don't know.

AG: How long did he live here?

JS: A couple of years. I'm trying to think, would it have been year-round? […] Maybe most of a year [...]. So the first spring, let me think. The first spring I came out with a herring permit and a herring net, and the second year and I fished herring and Dungeness and halibut and so that was my income. And then I think it was the next spring rolled around and Al Owens from up [in Village Islands] asked me if I wanted to cook pre-season at the cannery for the beach gang, cook until the cook showed up, and I did. And so Al sent a plane from the cannery to come pick me up. […] I didn't know when they were coming so I wasn't exactly prepared to go when I went, so I just up and left. And Chief was here and I had a dog and my cat and chickens and everything and Chief was left home alone here. Well, the next time I came back over here, I came to get my skiff. I got a ride from one of the beach gang guys. And Chief was not very happy […]. And my cat was limping and her nickname was the "White Death." She was a little bit of a mean cat. […] I said, "Chief, what's wrong with Mouser?" And he said, "She made me mad so I beat her with a board." […] I walked out and then I walked back in and I said, "You know what, Chief? I'm leaving in an hour and so are you." And he said, "No, I'll go tomorrow." I said, "No, you'll go today." And so on the way back up to [the cannery] I dropped him off [in Village Islands]. You know, if you're gonna beat my animals you gotta go. He didn't like being here without somebody taking care of him so that was the end of—. Chief didn't like me anymore after that.

Al and Hazel Owens. P-776-77.

AG: Oh.

JS: So. That was the end of my history with Chief.

[…]

AG: [You have] many visitors it seems, huh?

JS: Well, at visiting time of year. Yeah.

AG: […] When you […] would fish would you always bring your fish to town for delivery? Or did you sell to the cannery or how did that work?

JS: If there was a tender I would always have a tender do it because I don't run to and from town.

AG: Yeah.

[…]

JS: No, I only once did. I'm not a run-to-towner, so when Dave and I fished he would run the fish to town […]. I always had animals. I had goats and things and I couldn't just up and leave everybody so it was—.

[…]

JS: […] [Dave is] the one that jacked the house up. And he worked over at the cannery in the summers.

AG: […] When did you end commercial fishing? Or do you still do so?

JS: Well, let me think. Commercial fishing. […] The last of my commercial fishing I guess was '88. Nope. '88 was my last gillnetting year and 'cause I didn't gillnet the oil spill year because I was planning on fishing Dungeness […] Dungeness completely disappeared to the sea otters [in the '90s] […] We halibut fished still a little bit after that. […]

AG: Could you tell me about what happened in the bay during the oil spill?

JS: I did not partake in all of that. So no, not really. I just fished Dungeness as I planned on.

AG: So did oil reach back here?

JS: No

AG: That must have been such a relief for you.

JS: Yes. I mean I don't know how much oil there was out there honestly. I know that they were picking garbage up off the beach, but I don't know that they actually got oil. I don't know.

AG: And you weren't tempted to participate in the clean-up effort?

JS: No.

AG: Why not?

JS: I just didn't.

AG: I asked just because I know it was a very controversial—

JS: Right.

AG: —time and decision to make.

JS: Right. I kind of thought that whole cleanup it really pitted the gillnetters against the seiners and […] the gillnetters are my friends so I don't wanna say anything. I don't know. I mean I honestly don't know that there was any oil out there. They will probably tell you that there was, but it just was a way for Exxon to smear money on everything and throw some money around, but we still had an oil spill and a big mess and I think the more cleanup they did the more disaster they created, so I didn't honestly want a part of it.

AG: Do you feel like the oil spill changed things within the bay maybe?

JS: Maybe.

[…]

AG: I'm wondering how did things change out here when the cannery closed?

JS: Oh, our cannery. Well, I mean I cooked at the cannery. That was one of my jobs pre and post season, not during the season. I didn't work during the season. […] You could buy groceries over there and get your fuel. That was the biggest is not being able to get fuel now, having to get from town. But you did your laundry and took showers and it was just the social thing, and now to watch those beautiful old buildings just deteriorating is heart breaking. Just the demise of these remote salmon canneries 'cause there was a lot of them around Alaska. […] Ours was one of the last ones. There's still Alitak, Port—.

AG: Larsen Bay.

JS: Larsen Bay, I mean. Yeah, so it changed a lot. I mean there used to be two hundred people over there in the summertime and now there's one person.

Jeanne Shepherd, Mush Bay, 2015. P-100-8-122.

AG: How long were you a cook out there for?

JS: I don't remember the last time. Well, I turned sixty this year. My memory is not so good. I don't know that I did it up until the cannery closed because also in the meantime I've started working for Dick Rohrer. I cook spring and fall bear hunts and then they do summer fishing, bear viewing. So I've been working for him for twenty years now and that's when I quit going over to the cannery to do that. So I used to fish herring and halibut and then cook pre-season at the cannery, salmon gillnet, then go cook post-season at the cannery, and then my parents would come for silvers, fishing silvers up the river, and so it was a little bit hectic […] and somewhere in there I started cooking for Dick. In the meantime, dropped the cannery and then I didn't gillnet after '88.

AG: And now that's you main non-subsistence activity?

JS: Yep, cooking at the bear camp.

AG: How do you enjoy that?

JS: Oh, it's good. […] I do see it as a management program which I didn't initially, but when I first moved out here thirty some years ago, like thirty-four years ago now, if you saw one bear you'd talk about it all week long. "I saw a bear across the bay the other day," but now you can go up the river in September and see sixty-five bears […]. I mean you have family groups, a sow with three cubs. You see ten sows with three cubs. You've got a lot of bears already, so you float the river and, "Oh my gosh. We saw sixty-four bears!" "Oh did you count the one…?" You know, there's so many bears and […] if the bear hunters want to take the big bears, they want a big bear, they don't want just any bear, and that's their only natural predator, is the big boar wants to kill the cubs to mate with the sow. So if he can kill off one or two or three cubs then she'll come into heat tomorrow and they will breed, but when you keep taking the larger bear out of the picture now it's the next larger sized bear is trying to kill off the cubs and she's able sometimes to defend. She can kill him or run him off and the cubs survive, so those cubs are growing up having cubs and now the population has exploded since I've been here and that's a fact.

AG: What are your favorite meals to cook?

JS: Salmon. Salmon. I don't know. I am not a fancy cook. The clientele changes every so many days. My boss fortunately tells me, "You only need to know how to make ten things" and because we have ten day hunts for bear hunting and they're not adventuresome eaters. They like to recognize what's on their plate and they're meat and potato kind of people. So he doesn't want any mystery food and I was told, Mike Rostad cooked before me and he said, "Whatever you do don't fix them quiche." Well to me, that's a challenge so, of course, I've tried to feed them quiche and it didn't work until one day when we had a, in the summertime we have women and families and stuff for the fishing and photography groups, and one woman comes in and said, "Oh, quiche." She was so excited and I said, "No! No! No! Don't call it that." And she goes, "Oh." She didn't know what and I said, "We need to call it hunter's pie." So we did. That's what we call it now and they're like, "Oh, this is good." But since real men don't eat quiche, I couldn't fix it for them and they would not eat it, but they do now if we call it hunter's pie.

AG: Oh my goodness. Who was it that taught you or did you teach yourself how to hunt and dress a deer?

JS: I pretty much taught myself, I guess.

AG: Do you remember your first experience with that?

JS: Yeah. I do.

[…]

JS: So the first time I got a deer I was over here with Pam and two people from town, two guys from town. They chartered the plane. They wanted to come out remote. The one guy in town's brother was visiting from Houston or something like that and he wanted to, "Can we go to your place?" "Well, it's pretty rustic. It's gonna be cold." It was December, I think, and it's gonna be cold. I mean it hasn't been opened up since whenever I was last out here. That was before I was living here year round like that first winter. And we came on out and it was really cold and we did not get a deer. I mean they wanted to come out for the experience. I wanted some meat in town. While I was out here I gonna hope to get a deer, but I'd never shot one before by my own self. I've cleaned plenty, you know, helped skin them out and everything, and so when we left I had called Bob and Bernice, the watchmen over at the cannery, because I didn't wanna go home without a deer and I

don't have anything really to go back to town for […] so I said, "Could we get dropped off over at your place? Is that okay?" "Yeah, come on over." So we did. […] Bob was a character and he took us deer hunting and I shot and killed my first deer […] Well so anyway, it was a boy deer and I didn't know where to start and anyway he walked away and I didn't know what to do and so by the time he came back down we were bloody up to here and had it all skinned out and done and it was no big deal. So.

AG: And you were proud.

JS: Yeah, and I brought home the bacon. That was my first deer. And then we took it back to town and had some meat to eat on. You know, it was really hard to go hungry around Kodiak. You could stick a fishing pole in the boat harbor if you had to and come up with dinner if you wanted to eat.

AG: Thank you (*spoken to unknown person*). And do you save seed then out here?

JS: Be very careful with these out here. These are not yard glasses (*Spoken to someone in the room*). Save seeds? Yes, yes. [Squash, flowers, herbs. Some things re-seed themselves right in the gardens.]

Jeanne Shepherd. P-1000-8-88.