

Perry River Project

Taped at Gjoa Haven

September 2003

David & Alice Siksik

(English)

**Interviewer: David Pelly
Interpreter: David Qirqut
Transcribed by: Ben Kogvik**

Q He said that today is September 10, and that he would be interviewing David and Alice Siksik. He said that he himself would be conducting the interview and his name is David Pelly and I'm David Qirrut who will be interpreting. This is about Perry River, our move from Perry River to Gjoa Haven... your move is what he will want to hear about.

He said that, first he'd like to ask Alice about the consent forms that we just signed whether you understand them and agree to them. [David Siksik had confirmed prior to a previous interview.]

AS Yes, I understand them.

Q He said that, while we are being taped, that if either of you have any thing that you want to say about this feel free to say it before we really start the discussion about the move from Perry River to Gjoa Haven. Is that okay?

DS Yeah, it's okay.

AS It's fine.

Q He said that first of all he recorded David yesterday, but if he wants to say anything, at anytime, he can speak.

DS Yes.

Q He said though, he would like to ask Alice first about her birth, the date and where she was born and her parents' names. She can say these.

AS April 4 was when I was born in 1955.

Q Have you heard the place where you were born?

AS Apparently it was between Hat Island and Perry River on the ice.

DS Around here somewhere [pointing to map].

AS Taigiumi.

Q You can also say your parents' names.

AS My father is Tommy Halluqtalik, and my mother is Emily Halluqtalik.

Q He said that, he will be asking Alice questions, about what she remembers regarding the trip from Perry River to attempt traveling towards Gjoa Haven, but don't hesitate... don't hesitate to talk when you want to say... whenever you want to say something, feel free to talk.

He asked that, at Perry River before the store was closed, if you have anything that you can remember? You can talk about the store before they closed it, how you lived, if you can remember any of it.

AS I don't really remember a lot as I was just a child. I first heard about the store ... I was just a kid when I heard that the store was closing. I sort of heard that, I think, while I was at Inuvik or maybe after I got home, I don't know. I can't remember some of those things, but my parents never really stayed at Perry Island. They stayed away from people. They seemed to stay away from others, hunting, trying to stay where there are animals, though I don't really know. But they probably were trying to stay where there was game. So my parents usually stayed away from people, that's how they were. I know that when I was a child, they didn't stay there at Perry River where the buildings are. Only when it was almost Christmas time, and Easter, and when they were going shopping [trading], that they went there.

Q He asked about when you went to Inuvik for school. He wants to know more about when you went to school. He wants to know how old you were when you first went to Inuvik for school and how the students were brought to Inuvik?

AS When I first learned that I would be going to Inuvik for the first time, when I heard... I seem to have heard that and was brought by boat by my parents to Perry Island. I cried all the way until I reached Perry Island because I didn't want to go. I'd miss my parents. When we woke up, they said that the plane would be coming so they tried to wake me up and I did eventually get up, but I was really crying hard. So they brought me to the plane, the first time was when I was six or seven years old. That was when my peers, and kids older than me, were already going to school, but I was last... I wasn't the last one, but later when I was seven or eight years old - anyways one of those ages - I went to Inuvik for school.

Q Were you brought there by your parents?

AS Yeah.

Q Innakhaqvik?

AS Perry Island.

DS Innakhaqvik, that's where the store was at Perry Island that's the Inuktitut name... that's what it's called.

Q How many years or how long did you go to school in Inuvik?

AS For five years I went to Inuvik.

Q The last time you went to school from Perry River to Inuvik, when you went to school the last time, do you remember the year and the month?

AS It was May 1966 the last time I went to Inuvik that I came home. I came home by plane.

Q When you came home from Inuvik, it was May 1966 that you came from school in Inuvik for the last time? How long were you home when there was no more store?

AS When I got home there, my parents brought me to the tent. When I went into the tent the blankets were packed, my father told me that the store... he said that the store had closed down, at our land where we lived, so we would be traveling in a little while, that's what he said. We were apparently moving to Gjoa Haven. He said they were going to move. I didn't stay there for many hours and then I was traveling after I got home.

Q He thought that the store closed down in 1967 instead. Yesterday we were told that it might have been in 1966 so we thought it might be that.

AS Yes.

DS 66, it was 66.

AS I had know idea what the 19-something years were at that time, nor the months, until I started going to school. That's the only time I think that I learned the months as well.

Q This came from you. This is a letter that came from you, the one that was signed by Apiana. It's written that in 1967 the people of Perry River were told that there would be no more store, so I wonder if there was a mix-up on the year?

DS Yes.

Q It was written as 1967.

AS 1960 something... if I've made a mistake it's because I was only an 11 year old child that just got back from Inuvik, so I wasn't too sure about anything.

Q Let's clarify what you said before, when you said that you came home from school in Inuvik in May, without worrying about the year, whether it was 1966 or 1967. So without thinking about that, do you remember after you were in Inuvik for school and returned home, they were going to travel, your parents were going to travel. Is that correct?

AS Yes, I understand. I know for sure that when I came home from Inuvik, after I got out of the plane, my parents brought me home. They were all packed up when I went inside the tent. They said that there was no more white person, so the store was closed.

Q The last time from Inuvik, that you had school then came home there, did you have others go to school with you? Other than yourself, who else came home with you?

AS There were seven, or six of us, or eight perhaps... one of those.

Q Those went home.

AS If I said their names would it be easier to tell?

Q Yes, you can go ahead and say them if you wish.

AS Gwen Angulalik [now Gwen Ohokak], Martha Angulalik, Colin Angulalik, Lila Topilikot, Norman Ullikattaq, Molly Halluqtalik [now Molly Siutinnuaq] and myself. I think there were more kids but I think they were dropped off at Cambridge Bay, as [their families had] moved there.

Q What about Lila?

AS At Inuvik ah yes, she lives in Yellowknife. She moved to Cambridge Bay. Norman, my younger sister and myself. Oh, and Apiana's daughter, the late Margaret.

Q When you got home from Inuvik, and the plane was going to go, was there anyone, Inuk or white person, that boarded the plane?

AS No one went on.

Q Yes.

AS There was no white person at the place where we lived.

Q Do you remember how the white person who was the store manager left, or were you told how he left?

AS I wasn't there when he left. If he just left, or whether he was gone for quite some time, that I wasn't told. But I was told that there was no more white person.

Q After you were home and your parents told you that you would be traveling towards Gjoa Haven, what do you remember after that?

AS When I went into my parents tent they were already packed up. I was told to eat but I didn't want to eat because this is what I was thinking when I was a child: why are the people who lived as neighbours going to split, why are they splitting up. I was thinking that we should go to Cambridge Bay instead. I thought that we didn't have relatives in Gjoa Haven, so why do they want to go to Gjoa Haven, that's what I was thinking. I know when we were going to leave, the late Sam Emingak said, "See you, see you in a while." I didn't understand him and thought that he meant we'll see you in a couple of days, that's what I thought as we were leaving. Somewhere, I thought it was at Tulguqtitiivik that we camped, but I'm not sure where.

Q What did Emingak say?

AS “See you in a while.”

DS It sounds like saying in a couple of days.

Q Yes. Did you travel by dog team?

AS Yes, by dog team.

Q To Tulguq... what?

DS Tulguqtitiivik.

AS We spent several days over there but I don’t know how many. I was happy. I was happier now. My relatives were either already there or they came after... they came after my parents. When I woke up Magaknak, who is my uncle, came in. I saw him come in and he reached out and said that he wanted to shake the hand of a white person, which he was calling me. When I saw him, I became happy, I got happier. I don’t know the place that my parents used to go to, so I could be saying that a certain place is closer when it’s actually farther and vice-versa. We stayed there for some days. What’s the name of the river where we waited for the ice to go?

DS Kuugayuk [Simpson River].

AS Simpson River, at Simpson River there was ice. It didn’t seem that we were there for too long and the ice left.

Q Do you remember how long you stayed at Simpson River?

AS I don’t remember how long, I don’t know how long we stayed there, as I was only a child.

Q You can talk about when you left from Simpson River towards Gjoa Haven.

AS Yes. I know Simpson River, since I was a child my parents stayed there from time to time. We started heading this way by boat and camped somewhere, but I’m not sure where, as I seem to forget at times. Some of the things that happened last, some of the things that happened last, I’ve said first. I wouldn’t talk for long as I don’t know too much. From there we left. We went by boat, my parents went by boat. My father was the only one who handled the boat there and I thought that he wasn’t working hard, but apparently he was working very hard as the boat had an in-board motor. When we go by big waves... we were all in the boat and I remember being very scared, because the motor was very slow. They went by boat. These people traveled. I used to wonder why they weren’t together in one place, although they were not too far apart where they had their tents, but apparently it was due to them being blocked by ice. Their path was blocked. I think it may be

due to them moving to another place that I would become hungry sometimes. I would become a bit hungry sometimes as they were kind of short on food because there was no white-man's food given. Perhaps they weren't given anything, but I don't know. There was no more white-man's food and we traveled for many months somewhere, apparently to Ulivyaqniqtuuq. At Ulivyaqniqtuuq we waited for the ice to go so I didn't forget Ulivyaqniqtuuq. I remember there. I remember we spent days there with my parents and Siksik's adoptive parents. There were also others slightly away from us whose paths were also blocked by ice. When we were there with my parents and grandparents, Ullikattaqs and who else, Annie Magaknak. Maybe Magaknak was left behind. I've forgotten some parts. My parents and Ullikattaqs, those people and Annie Magaknak. Siksik, Apiana and Magaknak went to Gjoa Haven before that. My parents started going to Gjoa Haven. I got left behind with Siksik's adoptive parents.

Q From there did you go by boat, did you travel?

DS Yes, to Cam - 2.

Q Do you know why you were left behind there.

AS Siksik's adoptive parents apparently told my parents they wanted help, as they were going to be alone. There was Kupluguk and his wife. Apiana's late wife was pregnant, so myself being a child, could I even help? They wanted my help so I was told to stay behind there. While I was left behind there, I would wake up and there would be snow. We would wake up and sometimes the snow would melt. I don't know how long we stayed there. I could go fetch water, so I'd get wet. I would go get water but I never had to handle meat. I played as I was still a child. I was a child. While we were still there, the next time I woke up after I ate, they said they were going to go pick heather and go take a look out towards Gjoa Haven, over there. We walked, probably towards there, not far from the tent, apparently they looked. He was looking out because he was expecting them. I don't know how many times we slept again, and I don't know if we were walking or what we were doing, someone saw a boat between a lot of ice, between the ice. We went to the ice. We were on the land and couldn't walk on the ice, so we waited on the shore, and it was Apiana. When he arrived I wasn't listening to what he was saying. I don't know what he said, as I wasn't listening, because I wasn't thinking of anything. Maybe that same night or the next day when we ate, after Apiana arrived, we ate putting out the left-overs. I was told to throw out the bones, so I picked them up and went out and walked from there. While I was walking, when I was walking, I heard the gravel. I could hear gravel. I heard something moving over the gravel, getting closer. I scare very easily and I got scared, so I just dropped what I was holding and went into the tent. I didn't say anything when I went in the tent about hearing the scraping sound of gravel. After I was inside for a while I heard outside "She threw something!" We could hear someone say that somebody threw something down on the ground, then came in. It was Magaknak and Siksik. I remember when they came, but I don't remember how many more days we spent there. We seemed to have spent the summer and into fall there at Ulivyaqniqtuuq. It seems we stayed till winter. We waited for winter there after these guys arrived.

It was good enough for iglus so someone built an iglu. So we went into the iglu. When we started staying in the iglu, it was so much better. After the iglus, it didn't seem long after we moved into the iglus that I heard Magaknak wanted to walk to Gjoa Haven. I heard him say that. He was told to take a dog along and it seems that he took one dog. I think I asked to go with him. He said he was going to walk, that there would be only one dog, so he didn't want me to go with him. Perhaps they spent several days there, but I don't know. Then we traveled by dog team and I don't know how many times we camped.

Q Do you know where you traveled to, when you left from there?

AS From Ulivyaqniqtuuq, I don't know where we traveled to, when we started heading this way. I don't know where we camped. I don't remember them camping. When they kept traveling, I knew that I would soon be seeing my parents. I expected to be seeing my relatives and was happy. I was extremely happy thinking about it. When we started traveling again they said that they could see the lights probably from Cam-2. When they said they could see the lights, it was so joyous as we knew we would be reaching people. After they could see them, I don't know if we reached there right away or if we camped again. I don't remember when we were traveling to Cam-2, when we got close, I don't remember if anyone came out to meet us part way but I was so happy to have reached my parents. I don't remember which it was October or November that we made it to Cam-2 and I moved in with my parents there. I thought that I didn't have relatives. I didn't think that I had relatives and that my parents didn't have any relatives, but apparently my father had a younger brother. When I saw my relatives, I thought, so these are my relatives.

Q When you reached Cam-2?

AS Yes. I also remember that it was Christmas time there, I finally got to Gjoa Haven in January of 1967 but I don't remember the day.

Q After getting back from school in Inuvik, when you got back [to Perry River], the store was closed, when you returned. When it was closing, were all of the people, or just some of them, given food, white-man's food? Do you remember if your parents were given anything?

AS Yes, they were given something when they started going this way: tea... they would gather together to eat bannock. They would have bannock as well. But they spent many days in between, so the white-man's food... I wasn't having bannock much anymore, so I remember becoming hungry.

Q That little bit of white-man's supplies, which was given to you or to your parents when the store was closing, did they include ammunition.

DS There was absolutely no bullets. There wasn't anything for hunting, not even nets. Just a bit of food. There was flour, tea, and sugar. That's all there was.

Q Was there any fuel oil or gasoline included.

- DS Yes, I wasn't given anything with the others at that time, although I wasn't a child anymore. There was no gasoline nor any fuel oil.
- Q When you went back to Perry River, when you got back from school in Inuvik, when you were being brought back, before you heard that there was no more store, did you think that you were going to go back to Inuvik?
- AS Yes, I was going to keep going to school. But my parents said that they were going to move. I wanted to keep going to Inuvik, so I was hoping that they would move to Cambridge Bay at that time.
- Q There were four of you that came from Inuvik from school. You were brought back to your parents. After you were at Gjoa Haven – those four: yourself, Molly, Norman and Margaret – did any of you go back to school in Inuvik, do you remember, after you got to Gjoa Haven?
- AS They didn't go to Inuvik but had school only here.
- Q Gjoa Haven had a school when you moved here? Those that could have school probably didn't start school right away?
- AS I don't know.
- Q Was there a school already?
- AS Yes, there was a school. When I came home from Inuvik, I didn't go back to school at all, but I don't know why. I didn't want to go to school, so I didn't go back to school even here.
- Q What about those students you came home with that moved to Cambridge Bay? After they were in Cambridge Bay, did you hear if they went back to Inuvik for school?
- AS I think that Gwen Ohokak went to school in Yellowknife. I think that she kept going to school, that's what she told me.
- Q When you were moving from Simpson River towards Gjoa Haven, did you know at that time, or before that, that you were going to be married?
- DS Yes, way before the time they started going to Inuvik, our parents – her father and my adoptive father, Kupluguq – had already discussed this with each other. Kupluguq wanted a daughter-in-law and her father wanted me for a son-in-law. It was set-up, that's how it was, way ahead of time.
- Q This was the tradition in the Inuit culture that you used. If you want to add anything more about this you can, and if you don't want to add anymore to it you don't have to.

DS Yes, I know about what happened. My adoptive father from over there acquired a 300 rifle. When he bought a rifle, he wanted a daughter-in-law and gave the rifle he just bought to my father-in-law, long before we got together. I don't know how many years he had to wait.

AS This was while I was still a child.

DS That's when she was still a child. Therefore I have that 300 rifle. When my father-in-law was passing away, he wanted me to keep it. Also my father-in-law and my adoptive father wanted to keep good relations, so that's what they did, because they wanted to have good relatives and to have good son- and daughter-in-laws. They weren't afraid, perhaps they felt comfortable with each other as well, so that they wanted to have good relations, so that's probably why they did this. Both have passed away. If you want to ask anything feel free to say it.

AS Siksik's adoptive parents were older than my parents, so that's what they did. I strongly disagreed to it at that time. My mother kept advising me, saying that they are the eldest and that she didn't want to reject them. That's what she kept saying, she kept saying that. I finally agreed with her and when I was 16, I got married.

Q Thinking about your travel from Simpson River to Gjoa Haven, or to Cam-2 and then to Gjoa Haven, how hard, how harsh was it while you were traveling?

DS Which of us, are you asking? Her?

Q Yes, okay, Alice?

AS Yeah, long afterward, it wasn't until quite a long time later, it wasn't that long ago, that I started thinking that these men worked extremely hard, these relatives. The married couples went through much hardship while us children never thought that they were in a lot of stress, but apparently they had to work very hard. I remember being hungry and there was a little bit of caribou fat. There happened to be a bit of caribou fat, but I don't know if there was any meat. That powdered milk, the old KLIM milk powder, I would cut a bit of caribou fat and somehow used the powdered milk with the fat to eat it, that I didn't forget.

Q If you want to add anything to that, if either of you want to add anything, you are free to talk.

DS Yes, she said that she was hungry. We waited for freeze-up over there at Ulivyaqniqtuuq before it froze ice. Long before it froze up, we ran out of tea. Apiana found a 45 gallon drum of methol hydrate, that wasn't full, that had drifted to shore. We would pour a little bit into a metal container and cook with it outside. We would cook meat with it. We would use perhaps those prickly plants or something that would become tea. We'd make tea with not actual tea, but a plant that becomes tea.

Q That thing that was found was drifted in?

DS Yes. We are probably just about done talking. So after we were living in Gjoa Haven and I started staying with her, it was a long time before I received social assistance. I don't know what the reason was, perhaps due to documents or something. I don't know how many months after I moved here, three or two months were gone, that I finally was given social assistance myself. When I was given social assistance for one month it was 30 dollars that I was given the first time.

Q While you were still at Perry River before moving to Gjoa Haven did you receive social assistance before or was it the first time that you received social assistance when you moved to Gjoa Haven?

DS I got social assistance for the first time after we got here to Gjoa Haven. Over there, I never got social assistance, as I tried to keep trapping.

Q If you have anything more to talk about you can feel free to talk. If you don't have anything more to say you can stop.

DS Yes.

AS Over here, where again? I'm going to retract back as I was also with Kupluguks, and Anaijaq acted like she was my step-mother, while I was over there. I think it was when we were about to start traveling to Gjoa Haven that I heard they went to pick up something. Siksik and Apiana and maybe Magaknak may have gone with them, perhaps sleds or something that they went to pick up. When they got back, after they were back they didn't take long to get back. Maybe they didn't get back right away, but when they got back I heard somebody saying what made me really scared about wolves. They said that wolves ate some things, even metal items, even metal items and broken wood, and hearing this really frightened me.

Q The place where you went to pick up the sleds? The wolves?

DS Yes, at Simpson River.

AS I don't know what else to say. I'm not sure what to say without being asked a question. I'm now just grateful that my parents moved to Gjoa Haven because they wanted to move. I'm thankful. I'm grateful to be here, though I really wanted to go to Cambridge Bay at that time when I was a child. When I get the chance to go to Cambridge Bay I find it very boring in Cambridge Bay!

DS I also don't know what else to say but if there is a question that makes sense I would try to answer, but for now I don't know what to say.

Q No further questions. Thank you.

DS Yes, thank you too.