

**INTERVIEW WITH TISHU ALEN**  
**Unidentified interviewer**

Tell us about the old religious customs of the Eskimo.

Ms. Alen: When someone died they'd take it out and make a platform and bury it that way, covered up at the burial. A year after that; they'd take full year gathering everything for the garments. The women tanned and sewed for a whole a month making new garments for the people that helped during the illness, burial and all of that. Then they would gather all of the food of a feast. Before they ate, they started giving the garments out. They'd get up and they'd sign. The people that had helped were on the other side of the building lined up on the side. They'd get up and sing and take it over there and then sign and go back and get some more. They did this until all of the clothes; boots, mittens, parkas, pants were gone. All of the of people who had helped, men and women would get clothes. After the ceremony, then they'd have a big feast and dance. That's really all there is.

And that was in celebration of the person who had died?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Did they do this with a little baby too?

Ms. Alen: No, just for an older person who had died. Like for a person who had just recently died [Name unintelligible]; we have to gather now, for next year. Then we will have ceremony and all of the people who have helped. We have to do it soon.

Was there any such thing as a marriage ceremony?

Ms. Alen: No, not that I know of. The parents talk among themselves and make an agreement. The boy and the girl have nothing to do with it. You'd just sit there. Sometimes they'd talk quite a bit. They didn't want to [hurt] the boy or the girl. Sometimes they'd have quite a sit-to.

Oh, did they really?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah! They would really argue. When everything goes well, the boy comes to the house of the girl and stays there.

He moves in there?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, he moves in there, to the igloo with the parents. When they start to have the children, they build their own igloo and move out.

Getting back to the funerals; when did this ceremony a year later come to an end?

Ms. Alen: When the white people, the missionaries came. It ended there. My mother had trekked over into the Arctic. An old couple had adopted a little boy and he died along the way. They made a little platform and put him on this little sled and hauled him clear over to Question River and back again to Hammond River. In the meantime another lady died. They looked for a place where the sun wouldn't hit. They dug a tunnel into the mountain and lined it with thick moss. They put poles for the body to lay on and moss too. When they put them in they closed it up with thick moss and big trees and boulders so the animals wouldn't get in. That's where they laid them in for the summer. As soon as the freeze up happened, they went and got them so they have a missionary burial.

They carried the bodies clear down to Bettel?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

And there was a burial ground there and they had a Christian funeral service?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, they laid them there for the summer and as soon as freeze up they went and got the two bodies. That's how hard they lived.

That was an Episcopal service?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Now the Episcopal Church was strong up and down the Koyakuk River?

Ms. Alen: All over.

Do you remember some of the missions that you visited?

Ms. Alen: There was Allatna and then Fort Yukon.

Wasn't there one at Anvik?

Ms. Alen: No, I've never been there. We used to go to church every Sunday when we were there at Allatna. We had to cross the river though; walk across the ice.

There was the one church that served the Indians on one side and the Eskimos on the other?

Ms. Alen: Yes, on the other side, but we'd all get together and go to church.

And they all worshipped together in one church?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Now who were the people who ran the mission there? There were two women weren't there?

Ms. Alen: Ann Carter was one. There was Miss Kaye. Miss Hill came in after these people. There was Miss Ridgeway and another. I know Miss Carter. I knew her real well. But I didn't know her mate there.

They always kept two women there all of the time?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

One was usually a nurse and the other one a teacher?

Ms. Alen: I guess so.

And they gave the church service too?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. They'd have the service every Sunday, all day. We'd go in the morning and then in the evening.

Did they have Sunday school classes?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, they had school classes too.

School, and Sunday school?

Ms. Alen: Yes. I never attending it, I was too small. I was too little at the time.

But then, there were regular Priests who traveled to the villages weren't there?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. Hudson [Stuck] traveled all over with a dog team. If he would come in we'd have a service that night.

Do you remember him?

Ms. Alen: Yes. I remember him well.

What was he like?

Ms. Alen: He was quite a nice old chap, I thought. He'd sing very nice.  
I guess the Catholics had their Priests who traveled around too didn't they?

Ms. Alen: Not up in that country. They never come in that country. It was more that Hudson [Last name?] coming in. Then later, when he got old and retired, Rev. Crane came in.

Did you ever meet Bishop Bentley?

Ms. Alen: Yes, in Fairbanks. He came to the hospital and talked with me.

Tell me, now, I remember you mentioned the story about Martin Sliscoe's baptism. Tell us about that story in Wisemon when they wanted their children baptized.

Ms. Alen: Martin had three children baptized by this Catholic Priest.

Did he send for this Priest to come up there?

Ms. Alen: This Priest got up there and was putting on his cassock and he put his head in the sleeve and couldn't put it down over his head, or pull it off. He had quite a struggle getting it off.

He was getting himself ready for the baptism service that was going to be in the road house?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Did they usually say a Catholic Mass?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. He ordered holy candleholders and Martin went out and came back with one Seagram's and one Canadian Club bottle.

Those were the candleholders?

Ms. Alen: Yes, to hold the candles. The ceremony went on and then they went into early mass. It went on and he asked if there was anybody who wanted to make Confession and nobody made a move.

There were a few Catholics there weren't there?

Ms. Alen: There was a house full of Catholics. There were just a few of us Protestants in there. It was about three o'clock when we got through.

What time did it start?

Ms. Alen: Just around nine o'clock, or somewhere in there. It was a long stretch and we had to sit on hard benches. Then we had lunch and they took off for Fairbanks.

Tell about the Confessional.

Ms. Alen: He asked if there was anybody who wanted to come up and confess and nobody make a move. So he said that if there was anybody he would take them to the kitchen and hear their confession. Nobody made a move. So I said, "If this groups got to confess, you'll be here all summer!" It was a nice morning. I remember that real well. The sun was coming up. Of course, most of it was done in Latin too. That's one of the services that I attended too.

What about when there wasn't a Priest there, and a Catholic was to be buried?

Ms. Alen: They would go about twenty-five miles to get Pat Collier to hold the Service. It was done in Latin. They'd break trail and go get him. He was rather old and they'd haul him down. Then he'd hold the service.

What was his training?

Ms. Alen: He must have studied to be a Priest. He knew all about it. It was all done in Latin. I couldn't hear [understand] a word. My husband understood it, and he say it was beautiful.

So they said the service and then they had a wake?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, they had a wake too.

Did they always have a wake for people?

Ms. Alen: No, just certain people. They had a wake for Harry Foley. At six o'clock in the morning Mrs. Mursan and I put in a whole ham of moose to roast. It took both of us to lift it in. We seasoned it up first and it cooked all day. By the time...I don't know how they did it, but they must have hauled it over in the sled to the house. They really ate and danced that night.

How late did they dance?

Ms. Alen: Till about three or four o'clock in the morning. Some of us didn't feel like dancing. We thought a good deal of him.

Did they also have someone sitting up with the body?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, there were by two people who would sit for two hours, and people took turns all night and all day.

They didn't do this with everybody?

Ms. Alen: No. There were two that I know of.

Was this because they were Irish?

Ms. Alen: I guess so. It was their religion and background. There was Jack Rafferty and Harry Foley. That's all I'd seen up there. It was quite a thing.

We baked a lot of bread for sandwiches and made big dishpans of salad. Each lady had to make all of this in order to have enough for the whole crowd that comes in. There was a lot of work to it, really, and you half to hurry up.

The whole town would turn out for these things?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, the whole town. The mining people on the creeks come on too for this. They would try to have fun. It's not much fun.

It's not really so much fun?

Ms. Alen: No. You know these people had lived there since they were quite young and then they pass on like that. It didn't really seem like much fun, but I guess in their own way, they had to have it.

Where was the graveyard?

Ms. Alen: The graveyard is about one-fourth of a mile in back of the village.

Was there somebody who would make a coffin?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. Two or three would make the coffin and there was quite a few out there digging the grave. They'd have to thaw it out with a wood fire. It was quite a job. In the winter time especially. The summer time is worse because there is nothing to hold them over too long. You'd have to hurry and be out there night and day digging in order to get

them in quickly. It was quite a thing. They'd get together right away and talk it over and get going.

There was a lot of working together it sound like.

Ms. Alen: Yeah, everybody works together. We all have something to do with it. It was kind of bad...in summer time. In wintertime we could take a few days. Sometimes people would go out and invite people to come from way out on the creek. They'd get people to come in. It was quite a thing up there. Everything was made by hand.

Everything is "do it yourself"?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. It comes out pretty fast though. If someone gets sick on the creek there would be no trail for them. Someone would call in to town and tell the townspeople to break a trail. All of us, ten or fifteen of us would get out there on snowshoes and break a trail. We'd rotate—if the one in the lead got tired they'd just move over and the next one would be first. This followed through right to the end. Then your turn comes up again. It would be cold and blowing so you could hardly see anything. It's hard work, right up the hill. You know you've been places!

Did almost all of the Eskimos adopt the Christian faith?

Ms. Alen: I don't think so. Only partially.

Did the Christian religion make them happier?

Ms. Alen: I think so. Some really, really believe it. Like the Brinsons. If you'd get sick they'd pray for you. They think the prayer would heal them. But they all have to get together and pray real hard, all together. Not partially, just like one body. I've heard that too.

Did the Eskimo people believe in life after death before they learned about the Christian faith?

Ms. Alen: Yes, they do.

What did the Christian faith bring them that was more than what they'd had before?

Ms. Alen: I think....

Where did your mother learn to pray in the Christian way?

Ms. Alen: I think they first heard it over in the Koba country. They'd have people come in and talk with them who had picked it up from white men. They would translate it into Eskimo. They all got right in and believed it.

She used to pray over a lot of things?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. She prayed over a lot of things. It was always steadily praying.

Tell about how she would make tea...

Ms. Alen: Yeah, she'd make tea for me to drink if I wasn't feeling very well.

Did the old time Eskimos have something similar?

Ms. Alen: No.

They were dependent upon old time medicine men?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. They have to go to him. And they don't like that we didn't do it.

But once they got the Christian faith, they weren't supposed to go to medicine men?

Ms. Alen: No, no.

But a lot of them did both didn't they?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, I think so.

I wonder what their belief in life after death was, before the Christian faith.

Ms. Alen: There was a story from way back before my mothers time; somebody died and he stayed dead for four days and he came back and told beautiful stories about where he had been. I can't tell you what he said because I was too small. But I know that part.

What brought him back?

Ms. Alen: I don't know. He came back to report I guess. He lived quite a while afterwards and then he really died. He said it was a beautiful place he went too.

Most of the Eskimos weren't afraid to die where they?

Ms. Alen: No, they were very happy people. No one was afraid to die.

Did they have among the people strong religious leaders?



Ms. Alen: Yeah, they did. They were Christian. Before the Christians there were leaders who would get together and tell about how to go about living right. They had meetings quite often.

What did they do if a person did not live right?

Ms. Alen: They would get together and go and talk to them. They would try to make them see to go right.

What if that didn't do any good?

Ms. Alen: Medicine men, their nephew would take care of him.

The person would eventually disappear?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Did it scare people?

Ms. Alen: No.

But it made them want to live well in the community?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, if they were not right, they would do away....therefore there isn't much crime in the Eskimo group. It was very severe, but that was way before the white people had shown up.

So there was no murder, or crimes like that?

Ms. Alen: No. If they find out if there was murdering or something like that, they had to take care of it. Not somebody else.

What about stealing?

Ms. Alen: Stealing? There isn't much to steal! Not even food.

Was there more crime among the Eskimo people after the white man's ways came in?

Ms. Alen: A few of them, but not all of them. No, not that I know of.

I was baptized at [unintelligible] by Hudson Stupp December 14, 1910. My parents had trekking there to have me baptized by him.

What did the Bible mean to these people who hardly understood the English language?

Ms. Alen: They believed in it. They had it translated in to Eskimo.

They believed in the principle of God? And the believed in the sacrifice of His son, Jesus Christ?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Did they understand all of the other things in the Bible?

Ms. Alen: I don't think so.

What was most important to them in the Bible?

Ms. Alen: The Ten Commandments. That really got through to them.

That must have had some relationship to their lives.

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

Did they understand what the Crucifixion meant?

Ms. Alen: They understand it. I heard them talk about it when I was little. They talked about it in our language.

Did most of them seem to understand about the idea of heaven and hell?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. That got through too, I am sure.

Did they enjoy the Church services?

Ms. Alen: They seemed to. When I was a little girl, they seemed to.

And they would sing in their own language?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

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Ms. Alen: They had a football game that they'd play in the wintertime. They made the ball out of Caribou hide and stuff it with hair. The hair was on it, but they'd stuff it with

more. It was very bouncy. There was a goal on both ends of the place they played. They tried to make games and it would go on until late in the evenings some time.

Usually is the spring is when they would play it?

Ms. Alen: No, this was in wintertime, outdoors. They'd try to make the goal on the other end, and this end too. I don't know how they'd do it. I'd see them, but we'd never get out on the field. They'd run right over us.

This must have been the earliest football that there ever was.

Ms. Alen: Yeah, that was their own game. And they had another one in the summer. It was a smaller ball, made out of Caribou too. It was a kind of hand ball. And that goes on all night too.

Did they hit it against something?

Ms. Alen: No. It was teams. You throw it to your team and try to keep it up. They would shove one another.

How did they choose the teams?

Ms. Alen: They would just stand up and say, 'You be my partner.' That's it.

It was sort of like basketball?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. Only we didn't have a basket. You'd catch it. It was fun, but really rough. There was a lot of running too. It would go on all night. By midnight we'd have lunch and go right out again. I played it.

Did they play this when it was really cold, 20 or 30 below?

Ms. Alen: The football they played then. But the handball was for summer. They had another game that was played in the igloo. They'd put a stake up and throw sticks. Who ever got the closest would get so many numbers. [points] They'd play that in the evenings in the wintertime. They would also had up a mit and see who could kick the highest.

They do that at the Arctic Winter Games.

Ms. Alen: They'd do that too. I've seen an old lady kick. She had her mit hanging there in the tent. She put it up about about her navel, and then she backed up and kicked it. We got in the tent and tried it, but we fell backwards! We almost tore the tent down!

We couldn't do it!

She must have learned to do this many years before?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, mother and her could do it! We couldn't! We were too stiff. They would raise it each time they kicked it. There were some other games, but I don't know them because I've never seen them.

Did they play these games sometimes when other people came for a Pot Latch or a feast?

Ms. Alen: No, then they would do more dancing.

This was just in your little village?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, this was just our games. There was another game. There was a village about 3 miles away. The people would get together and they would masquerade dance. And then this group would go to their village. They would see which group was the best. There were prizes.

What were the masks made of?

Ms. Alen: I don't know what they were made of. Maybe wood. There was another game where you would go out and pick something out of the woods and bring it in. There was a prize. Everybody would try to guess. It's a guessing game. We'd sit there and everybody would try to guess what it was. Whoever was right got the prize.

Did they have any games that were played inside?

Ms. Alen: The guessing game was. And the stick throwing back and forth with a little stick.

How was that done?

Ms. Alen: You'd have a partner on the other side and you throw to the other side and get a score. Your partner would throw her stick to the stake near me. You would see who could get the closest to the stick.

Was it a special kind of stick?

Ms. Alen: No, just a small one. We use nails nowadays.

I suppose that's a lot like horseshoes.

Ms. Alen: Yeah, it's like horseshoes or ring toss. Throwing these sticks, you have to get down on your knees and toss it, and try to get it right on the stick that's standing up. You'd get more scores that way. But if you landed out a little way you'd get one point. You had two sticks to toss.

What is the Eskimo name for that game?

Ms. Alen: Tipadorik [sounds like]

What was the Eskimo name for the football game?

Ms. Alen: Ashshudrak [sounds like]

What about the name of the game that was like basketball?

Ms. Alen: That's [unintelligible].

What did you call the guessing game?

Ms. Alen: We just called it the guessing game. I've got to stop and think about that one. I can't say it in my old language. I've forgotten.

These are old games?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, this is all old, old games. They have a whole lot more games too that I never say.

In Wiseman's days, they mixed the white man's games with the Eskimo games didn't they?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, we had horseshoes and stuff like that.

But you used to play out in the evening?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, when we were going to school we had a place. It's a place where there was about a foot and a half of water, and when it was frozen we'd get Caribou hides and slide on the ice. There was a place where the ice ended and if you weren't quick enough you'd go in the water. You'd slide down and jump right off.

Was this in the spring?

Ms. Alen: No, in the wintertime.

It would be kind of cold!

Ms. Alen: Yeah! But only one or two of us fell in. But it makes you quick. It makes you react quickly.

Did the grown ups play with the kids quite a bit, as far as the games?

Ms. Alen: No.

But is Wiseman you used to play...

Ms. Alen: In Wiseman it was different. Everybody got out on Saturday evenings, and the whole day of Sunday. Everybody was out. The ones that had skates would skate. We had a sled and we'd take it up steep creek in the canyon at Wiseman. We'd put all of the little ones in and slide down with them. It was fun. The little ones liked it.

Before there were sleds, the Eskimo people slid on skins didn't they?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, on Caribou hides. You sit on the fur and skin part was next to the snow or ice. In the older days, we didn't want to waste hides too much. It was in the later years when us kids were growing up we could have all of the hides. It was really fund sliding on them. We'd stay out there until almost nine and then come in and go right to bed. It's just a little ways from here to that house, but we had to close it. We would all congregate right there and slide down. You could try to shove somebody who was in front of you.

You'd even play at night?

Ms. Alen: Yeah in the bright moonlight. It was beautiful. We used to go up to Wiseman with the dog team and leave after supper. A bunch of us would get in the sled, there was a bunch of dogs and go...in the moonlight. It was a beautiful ride.

How far was that?

Ms. Alen: Eleven miles.

And what did you do up there?

Ms. Alen: When we did this, we'd be going up there for a dance that was set for the next evening.

Oh, this was from Coldfoot? You'd go from Coldfoot to Wiseman.

Ms. Alen: Yeah. I danced from eight o'clock to light, and have breakfast, hitch up the dogs and go back to Coldfoot.

What dances did they do there?

Ms. Alen: There were waltzes and two steps and [sic] shoddish and square dances. The Eskimos would have there dancing there too.

So in Wiseman there was a mixture of all the people.

Ms. Alen: Yeah, and the white people would have to get up and try to dance it too. It makes it fun. At midnight we had lunch.

What kind of music did you have?

Ms. Alen: They had a phonograph, a Victrola that you had to wind up.

So somebody would have to stand there and wind it?

Ms. Alen: No, if you give it a good wind, it would run the record through. There was a piano there and somebody who knew how to play piano. It's still there I think.

Where there any other instruments like violins or drums?

Ms. Alen: Big Jim had a drum. Somebody sent it to him from outside. He brings that up. It's a big drum. He brings that up for the dances.

What did they do with the children for these dances when everybody turned out? Did they bring the children along?

Ms. Alen: There weren't too many children. We were pretty well grown up at the time. My children, in later years would be in bed. I'd go and check on them every little while. We didn't have baby sitters. We didn't know what a baby sitter was.

Did they ever bring the children along and put them to bed there?

Ms. Alen: No. They were mostly at home.

Did they get all dressed up for these dances?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah. We'd make thinks for it.

What were the principal celebrations when they danced?

Ms. Alen: We'd start with Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, George Washington's birthday.

There was a dance then!?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, and St. Patrick's Day. That's when all the Irish would get out and come. We had dance in the middle of April and then not again until maybe 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

What did they usually do for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?

Ms. Alen: We'd have to get out there and shoot.

Turkey shoots?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. We'd shoot targets and get a prize. There were money prizes. We'd make sloppy pies for the kids, for the boys to eat.

What were those pies made of?

Ms. Alen: They were watery pies for the boys to eat in a pie-eating contest. We had all of that. We'd make the pies out of blackberry or something.

Were there any speeches?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah, there were speeches. The old timers from the creeks would do all of the speaking. The Eskimos would get up and make speeches in our own language. Somebody would have to translate for them.

When was the next celebration after 4<sup>th</sup> of July?

Ms. Alen: It was in the fall.

After the people would come in from the creeks?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, they'd come in from the creeks after they'd get through mining and they'd have a big day, some time in September. There was something going on all of the time.

Tell about the ice-skating and how you'd all use one pair.

Ms. Alen: When we were going to school, we had a pair of ice skates. I think they were made for a man. They were men's skates; you'd strap them on. But there were eleven kids and we'd each take turns trying to skate on these. We strapped them on over our



moccasins. Some of us needed quite a bit of help to get on our feet. And then we'd need someone to give us a shove.

There was on size for all?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, and we'd tie them on the little folks too! We'd take strings and tie them on so each and every one of them had a chance at it. We got so that we were pretty good on it. We had a lot of fun.

But you didn't get much time on them though, with eleven people sharing!

Ms. Alen: No we didn't have much time, but we spent a whole day out there.

Where did you do the skating?

Ms Alen: Out on the river. We'd get tired of that, and on the next weekend if the ice was still good we'd get a big sled and put a sail on it and sail down about three miles. We only made two trips like that because it was so hard to get back up. We had to haul all of the little ones in the sled.

What did you make the sail out of?

Ms. Alen: Canvas. They had canvas there for the dog sleds. They'd put in on, and load it up and lash it closed. That's how they'd do it; they used a canvas. So we used that.

You put a big stake on the sled?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, we'd tie the sail to that and we all piled in. Somebody would steer for us and we'd go down real fast.

That must have been fun!

Ms. Alen: We'd go down real fast, as fast as the wind can go. It was a nice trip. The little folks were all bundled up. The only things sticking out were their little faces. They had double parkas and double everything.

The wind would sweep any snow right off the ice?

Ms. Alen: There was no snow on it.

It was just clear ice?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, just clear ice. We'd have to walk along the edge to get back up. We'd get back up and go down again, just to make two trips. It was a long walk, three miles back, hauling all of the little ones, you know.

In those Wiseman days, how about skis? Weren't there some that the Norwegian or Swedes brought with them?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, the young folks had skis.

Did they make their own?

Ms Alen: No, some people bought some of their own. Benny had a pair that Eli Hansen made.

How did he make them?

Ms. Alen: He made them out of birch. They were a beautiful little pair. I think I lost them.

What did they use for bindings, just a strap?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. I think he used two straps for binding. And he had poles too. My daughter's skies cost sixty-four dollars. We got them on sale too. Some have a steel edge on them. The kids take turns on them too. But they have more to do than we did. On the next weekend we'd go way up the mountain and we'd slid down on a little sled. We'd hit the river, it was clear ice and we'd sail right clear across the river. It's wide there, but we'd make it to the other side because we were going to fast.

Was this on Wiseman Creek?

Ms. Alen: That was in Cold Foot.

On the Koyakuk River?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. In the Wiseman days, they'd do their skating right them on Wiseman Creek, right in the village and up the canyon. Then they'd go up on the hill to ski. The other place where they'd go is down the river; it's about a mile out. They have a full day of it. Everybody gets out. Nobody stays in on weekends.

Everybody is outdoors?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, outdoors. The kids are playing, and we were playing. Everybody is out. If nothing else, we'd take long walks.

Were you hunting?

Ms. Alen: No, just hiking. We didn't go fast. We had a lot of little ones among us. We'd have to go by their gait. But it was a lot of fun. We'd tell stories as we walked along.

Did you climb the mountains?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah, we did a lot of climbing. We did a lot of hunting and with that you have to climb. On weekends we never stayed in, never. We'd start cooking around Friday for Saturday and Sunday so we don't have to stay in and cook. No, we never stayed in.

That's sounds great! You were busy!

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah. If you were out there, you have to get out in it. People that don't like it, well, they can stay in all week. It's better to get out.

Then you eat well, and sleep well too!

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah. On Saturday night they had lanterns. We'd fill them up and light them. They were gas lanterns and we'd hang them up over near the school. There's a place to play there, and they'd play there until almost nine. They play soccer ball, I guess.

Gee, that sounds fun too.

Ms. Alen: Mothers were in on it too, all of the time.

Children, mothers, fathers, grandparents, everybody was in on it?

Ms. Alen: Everybody is out! For a little village it was a lot of fun. There was something going on all of the time.

What did you do at Christmas time in the village of Wiseman?

Ms. Alen: We'd have one big family tree. It was put up in Pioneers Hall. Everybody would take there presents there and Santa Claus would come there. Santa Claus came in...I think it was 1934. He came in with a reindeer, no, I mean a Caribou; a calf Caribou.

Was it tame?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, it was tame. He had on a great big dog pack, and it was full of toys. I still have the pictures. Santa Claus had stopped someplace along the way and had a little too much to drink.

But the kids were impressed though?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah! They were impressed with this Caribou.

They children must have had a good time with all of these miners who didn't have families. They must have lavished a lot on the children.

Ms. Alen: Yeah, but not too much.

But they liked the kids?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah, they loved the kids. Us mothers had problems with some of the old miners. They'd come in and buy peanuts for the kids. You'd have to roast those before they were eaten. Kids would come in with a bag and you had to run and meet them and take it away from them and throw it in the oven.

Otherwise, what would happen?

Ms. Alen: They'd throw up.

Get a stomachache?

Ms. Alen: Yeah. We had to roast them first. For some reason, the kids would all get sick if we didn't. Those old time miners meant well.

Bill told about having an orange at Christmas and how that was a real treat; a real fresh orange. He told how you'd eat all of it.

Ms. Alen: Yeah! We'd all of it, right down to the outside, even the seeds. And with apples there would be just a stem left. In those days I don't think they waxed them they way to do now to make them shinny. Therefore, I don't eat the peeling, especially apples. They don't look like they did years ago.

How did these apples get in there? Did they fly them in?

Ms. Alen: They brought them in during the fall and saved them right up until Christmas.

Was there a special storage place?

Ms. Alen: Yeah, there was a cool place down in the basement.

Most of the cabins had a place for cold storage?

Ms. Alen: No, this was in the store. They'd give them out for the Christmas time. We'd buy them beforehand, but they saved them to give.

Who would be the Santa Claus at Christmas?

Ms. Alen: Jim Kelly. There was a Mr. Wilson. He was a good Santa Claus.

And then they'd have a dance at Christmas too?

Ms. Alen: Oh yeah. Afterwards. You'd take a pillowcase to put all of your presents in and run home to open them. Then you'd come back.

So you did not open them there?

Ms. Alen: No.

There was one Christmas tree for the whole village?

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

What did you use for decorations?

Ms. Alen: We decorated with popcorn and a few things that were brought in from outside.

Did you use cranberries?

Ms. Alen: No, I didn't see no cranberries. Only popcorn and candles.

Candles? Real candles?!

Ms. Alen: Yeah.

That was dangerous! Did they stand by with pans of water?