

Traditional Knowledge

Good morning, my name is Sarah Hudkins. I appreciate the time today to share about my family's legacy and Traditional Knowledge. In addition, I appreciate the support from Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association where I sit as a Director. To put faces to what I am about to share, you can refer to RC 124 submitted by KPFA. I am also a Kenaitze Tribal Member and appreciate their presence here today as well. What I would like to share with you is based on my own personal experience and what has been shared to me by my elders.

My Grandfather, Ole Frostad immigrated to Alaska from Norway in the early 1920's. He was in Seattle in 1923, then traveled to Kenai in 1924, where he met Homesteader, Jack Lewis. Jack had the original Homestead Trap. My Grandpa Ole worked the Libby, McNeill and Libby fish trap on Salamatof Beach, the same location where my family's fishery is conducted today. My Grandpa purchased a small piece of land on the beach from Jack Lewis, for \$200, which was a lot of money back then. He then built himself a beach cabin out of the old fish trap. Our cabin still stands there today.

My Grandfather began having children in Kenai in 1932 and in 1940, my Grandmother Mary and my Grandfather Ole welcomed twins to the family. One being my Father, Lars. My father told me that he and his twin brother were the first twins to both survive on the Kenai Peninsula and that they were stuck in the oven by the midwife to keep warm just after they were born. My Dad and his 4 siblings were raised on the beach working alongside my Grandfather.

Our cabin walls, built from the old fish traps, are historic in themselves. When you stand within them, that's when the real history lesson begins. From permit cards that spread out over decades, agates displayed, collected by people present and past, black and white photos from the good "old" days, and other relics that line the cabin beams. My favorite photo on the wall, a worn one of my Grandfather cooking sourdough hotcakes on the stove and right next to it is a photo of me from the day I was born. My elders thought we looked alike and it's been memorialized and hanging on the cabin wall for nearly 50 years. I never had the honor to meet my Grandfather as he passed away just before I was born, and from all of the stories I have heard, I sure wish I had.

In 1953, Jack Lewis, along with my Grandfather, Ole, built a hand trap that was on the inside of the larger Libby Mcniel and Libby's trap. It was quite controversial and the court system decided that Jack Lewis' trap was legal to fish that season. First in time, first in right was the norm in those days. Jack's trap was installed first.

Our family's way of life survived the statehood act, which outlawed fish traps, putting fisheries back into the hands of individuals. At that time, my Grandfather transitioned to set netting, which our family has done since. Everyone had their purpose, and the men and women and children worked alongside each other. As my Dad and his siblings grew up, they brought their partners to the beach, then their children. It is just what you did. Most kids went to camp during the summer. We spent our summers at fish camp with our family.

The little row boat that my Grandfather used to row out to reach the fish trap hangs as a relic in our shop. For much of my childhood, "Sarah's Toy" remained on the beach and while she couldn't float, it provided hours and hours of entertainment for me. It was my playpen on the beach. I was the luckiest little girl for sure. On occasion my Dad would take the time to jump in the boat with me and we would throw a piece of an old net out onto the sand, throw an anchor overboard, and pretend we were fishing. On occasion we would have a tea party. Those who knew my Dad might find this unbelievable, but I promise, during our tea parties, he had a softer side than that gruff old fisherman they knew.

The old Wards Cove Cannery was cleaned out a few years ago and Lisa Gabriel phoned to let me know that they had uncovered the Libby McNiel and Libby fish trap sign that hung on the end of the trap my Grandfather worked. We are honored to now have that proudly displayed in our shop. The trap records are safely tucked away and if only the sign could share the stories of exactly what life was like back then.

There were no VHF radios or cell phones as there are today and hand signals were used on the beach to set nets, pop the anchor or tell a tractor driver to go and stop. While we are connected by technology today, I was raised using these and have instilled the same to my own children and grandchildren. It is those special things that have continued over generations.

My Dad, like my Grandfather, loved to play cribbage when they weren't busy fishing, or fixing. They both enjoyed sharing meals with other fishermen on the beach, especially their famous sourdough hotcakes which are a staple on each fishing day. Today, besides running my own skiff, you will find me on the griddle, often in rain gear, flipping hotcakes myself, just as my Grandfather was doing in that treasured photo hanging on the cabin wall.

My Dad dedicated his life to commercial fishing, just as my Grandfather did. Their work ethic was top notch and they instilled and expected that from those that worked alongside. My Father was quoted in a documentary, stating that my Grandfather was "a

man of honesty, wouldn't cheat anyone, if anyone was going to get cheated he would cheat himself. Always willing to help a neighbor and he had new fishermen coming around asking how something was done. He would never hesitate, and was always willing to help. He was a hard working man all the way up until the day he died." Most who knew my Father would say the same about him. They instilled that same mentality in me.

Today, if you visit us on Salamatof Beach, my husband Jason and I will welcome you in the cabin for a cup of coffee, a sourdough hotcake breakfast, to share stories of the past, and our hopes for the future. Our twins, Shayla and Trenton and our youngest, Gavin, all grown adults now, will join us at the table and our grandchildren, Sophia, Ava and William will be running amuck with our golden retriever Bodhi on Salamatof Beach.

We still hear my Dads voice saying,

"if it's broke, fix it" which really means, fix it again, and again before you ever buy new.

"Time and tide wait for no one" meaning, you can be early, but don't be late.

"You're not so sweet, you are going to melt" when I was dreading a dark night pick, the waves were huge and it was raining sideways.

"See something, say something" especially when it comes to safety on the beach.

and a rare "atta girl", almost as rare as our Sarah's Toy tea parties, but always welcomed.

Lastly, but not likely surprising to those who know me today, my Dad would say, "Sarah, sometimes you talk too damn much!" So with that, I will sign off for today, give myself an "atta girl" and wish you all the best as we navigate the days ahead.