

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW OF JACK AND ROMA REAKOFF TALKING
ABOUT THE USE OF MUSHROOMS
CONDUCTED BY CAROL SCOTT
IN WISEMAN, ALASKA
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ORAL HISTORY 95-50-05_PT.4, SIDE A

JACK REAKOFF: Medicinal things that I've used or known of people using around here. And then the -- then we're in -- there's -- Mushrooms aren't on here.

CAROL SCOTT: Oh, yeah.

JACK REAKOFF: And they're like -- we're really into these mushrooms. There's certain real --

ROMA REAKOFF: Jack can tell you about the bad ones, too.

JACK REAKOFF: I got a hold of a bad one one time by accident. But we use different kinds of mushrooms. We're using the boletus types.

CAROL SCOTT: Okay.

JACK REAKOFF: And then we're using the Orange Delicious (*Lactarius deliciosus*?), which is a -- it's a real common and real super edible mushroom here. They really like to grow. They grow right in our yard. Right out in -- down through the trails back down here. The runway, and all around on these different trails. And they like to grow in like wash -- old wash areas that are regrowing with grasses like equisetum. Or a type of equisetum. And we're using the Shaggy Manes (*Coprinus comatus*) and Fried Chicken mushrooms (*Lyophyllum decastes*). They're real - - real meaty mushroom. Have you eaten very many mushrooms?

CAROL SCOTT: A few.

JACK REAKOFF: Oh.

CAROL SCOTT: I got a bad one once and that kinda killed it for awhile.

JACK REAKOFF: Yeah, I -- I accidentally -- I was picking in dusk and I got a hold of what -- I was picking Orange Delicious and I got a russela. A poison russela. A type of russela that's poison. And I -- I love mushrooms and I fried a huge pan. I was just eating mushrooms and as I was swallowing I thought, "Mm, that didn't taste quite right." So I kept eating, and about -- about six, five -- four, five, six hours later I started peeing about the color of coffee. I was like, "Whoa, what's this?" You know, it's like, "Uh, oh!" Boy, my kidneys were really sore. There's different types of mushroom poisons and some attack your vital organs. So this one did. And I had real super sensitive -- and still kind of do to a certain extent. If I drink a lot of coffee, my kidneys will start hurting. Coffee, I found -- Moral of the story is, I found out what -- what your kidneys really is hard on your kidneys. Aspirin is real hard on your kidneys, and coffee is real hard on your kidneys. Those two things that really, really bothered me when I had injured kidneys. They healed up pretty much. I mean, I'd say I'm 90% healed up. I ate that maybe four or five years ago, so I have a kidney disability from that. But I think -- I think aspirin and cof -- You know, if I drink over two cups of coffee, I start -- my kidneys get a little bit sore like. And aspirin is -- I

had back trouble and I was trying to reduce swelling with aspirin and whoa, that was like double trouble. It gave me a terrible backache at the same time. It's no fun. So yeah, you got to be cau -- I mean careful, but I mean there's -- there's some that -- the types that we're picking are pretty cool. Except, I mean, if you're diligent about looking at the characteristic of the mushroom that you're eating. Like these Orange Delicious, you cut them off and they -- they have a real super bright orange looks just like this band right here. It's white center and they'll bleed a sort of an orange band around the outside and there's this like -- and there's no other kind of a mushroom like that.

Yeah, you see stuff like that, it -- I'd eat 'em in a second, but I just don't trust myself.

JACK REAKOFF: Well, you -- you can cut those. We've dried those.

ROMA REAKOFF: Oh, they're really good.

JACK REAKOFF: Jerry showed us how to do that. He's -- he's from Tennessee, and, you know, those hillbillies, they're -- were kind of into basically subsistence down there. So they know how to dry. You know, they know how to take care of preserving a lot of things. He showed us how to dry mushrooms, which I've never seen anybody do it around here. Just taking a -- they made pieces. They made string beans. You know, that -- They would just take green beans and string 'em.

CAROL SCOTT: Wow.

JACK REAKOFF: And they would dry these things. Have 'em going all around their room. And they would dry 'em like that. He says that's how they would dry mushrooms, too. So we -- we started just taking 'em -- making a wire needle and like that All thread or that fishing line or something like that. You just poke 'em straight through the cap down through the stem and just keep stringing them on there. We had 'em going all around. It looked like a big party with all these mushrooms.

ROMA REAKOFF: I got two different kinds here.

CAROL SCOTT: Are these the orange ones?

JACK REAKOFF: Those are -- Those are those meadow mushrooms. Those are about two types of meadow mushrooms. Those are good mushrooms. Those are rarer up here. We've gotten those kind here, but not very often. Mostly, our main kinds are Shaggy Manes and Orange Delicious and boletus. There's different kinds of boletus. There's -- there's two kind. Well, there's three kinds of real good boletus. I mean, if you fry 'em in hot oil real quick, they're really good. So there's a lot of other kinds, but the mushroom book I have for Alaska, there's 500 and something kinds of mushrooms in Alaska. This mushroom book has 102 types, but the book is geared for Southcentral around Anchorage. So there's a lot of mushrooms that I can't even -- that grow around here, I can't even find them in this book. They're of the 400 or something that aren't in the book. But, I mean, I'm looking at some that are like, they smell good and you bite into 'em and tastes kind of good. Old Brockman over here, he had ate mushrooms that I haven't tried yet, but he ate them. He was into mushrooms. He figured if a squirrel ate 'em, they were good, but that's not true. He -- he would steal squirrel caches and they'll -- they'll stack up russulas and stuff.

CAROL SCOTT: Psychedelic mushrooms?

JACK REAKOFF: I don't know of any psilocybal (psilocybin) mushrooms that grow here. Although there was a kid -- a guy that was up here, he was really into these -- these psilocybal mushrooms down in Oregon. We're out in the hills walking around. It was like -- I don't know,

there's something about that year. It was sort of rainy, but sort of warm and there was mushrooms. I never ever seen mushrooms like that. They were growing on a sheep bed right on the tops of the mountains. There was mushrooms everywhere, and this guy was just -- he was saying, "Oh, that one's got a purple tint. I'm gonna try that one." He's looking for psilocybal. And I was like, "Hey, I don't eat poison mushrooms. I'm not dragging you off of these mountains, you know." It was just dumb. He tried crazy looking mushrooms. So there's -- Yeah, the mushrooms is kind of an important plant.