Town Mother, Grandmother to the World

Two Native American Elders

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The life history is a rich and particularly meaningful medium for feminist research. The life story itself gives voice to women who might not otherwise express their life experiences, bringing their narratives to the mass audience reachable by a published work. To myriad audiences the story is told and retold, each reader selecting from it different truths. The life history is equally rich as an act of research, for it does not confine the researcher to some contrived objective remove, but invites exploration of the researcher's role, motivations, and relationship to the life history subject at each step of the process. And, just as our act as researchers gives voice to silent women, so, reciprocally, their participation in the life history process demands our own self-examination. Ideally, the process is mutually reinforcing; as it leads to knowing others, so it ultimately leads to greater self-understanding. The life history enterprise is like a good story; examined and re-examined, it grows richer with each study and each retelling.

Over the last fifteen years, I have had the good fortune to be the recipient of the life stories of two Native American women elders, one Indian (Blackman 1982), the other Iñupiaq Eskimo (Blackman 1989). Although separated by twenty years in age, some 2000 miles, and the cultural gulf between between Northwest Coast Indian and Eskimo ways of life, the common threads in the lives of Florence Davidson and Sadie Neakok describe general parallels in the lives of Native women. The life stories of these two women as recorded and reported by a woman anthropologist also invite inquiry into the impact of the interviewer/author's gender and individual personality on both the raw data of the life history encounter and the final product. More personally, these life stories speak to the relational/emotional/motivational issues raised when women write about women (Chevigny 1983).

Florence Davidson

Between 1977 and 1980 I collected fifty hours of taped interviews from Florence Davidson, a Haida woman with whom I had lived during previous seasons of field work stretching back to 1970. Because I knew her not only as a valuable cultural resource expert but as an adopted grandmother with whom I had lived

during my research, I knew much about her life before I began working with Florence, and I knew her large extended family well. We had first talked of recording her life story and rendering it in book form in the summer of 1973 when I joined Florence at her fish camp on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Florence Davidson is now in her nineties. Although it has been years since she has gone upriver to her fish camp and she now spends a good part of each day resting in her bedroom or on the couch before the TV set, she still weaves cedarbark hats, entertains visitors, goes to church, attends celebratory events in her community (most recently a community-wide birthday party honoring her), travels off island to stay with relatives in Vancouver, and, with family assistance, manages to live alone in her large home.

Florence Davidson is a woman of high rank in a culture where social standing has traditionally been of the utmost importance. She is most often identified as the daughter of the famous Haida chief and artist, Charles Edenshaw, but her mother, Isabella, was also from a chiefly family and a renowned artist/basketmaker in her own right. When Florence was born in 1896, many of the visible features of traditional Haida culture had vanished. Only one or two families still lived in cedar plank long houses, totem poles were no longer being raised, and potlatches,[2] save for the Anglicanized mortuary potlatch, had been eliminated by the missionaries. Florence was raised in a Christian family with her four sisters and attended the mission school through the fourth grade when domestic duties took precedence over furthering her education. Despite the influences of church and school, she grew up speaking Haida, underwent one of the last traditional puberty seclusions, and like Haida women of her time was married when barely a teenager to a man more than twice her age who had been selected by her family. Florence's life is woven through a period of intensive change for her people, and today she -- the oldest person in her community -- and the few remaining Haida of her generation have become the living authorities on a culture and period of time that they touched only at the edges in early childhood.

Sadie Neakok

Sadie Neakok was born in Barrow, Alaska in 1916, the year Florence Davidson gave birth to her third child. The sixth of ten children of white trader/whaler Charles Brower and Asianggataq, his Iñupiaq wife, Sadie grew up with a foot in both white and Eskimo worlds -- living much the same life of her native friends as a child, but subject to the scheduled white man's meals at her father's trading station and to his passion for education. An understanding of English from childhood gave Sadie a decided advantage in school, and at age fourteen she was taken out by her father to San Francisco to attend high school, an experience that changed forever her perceptions of her Native community but intensified her commitment to Barrow and its people. Homesick for the north after five years Outside, she declined the admission to Stanford University she had won and headed home, later entering the University of Alaska. After two years of university education Sadie returned to Barrow to become a Bureau of Indian Affairs school teacher. She escaped marriage with the partner chosen for her in childhood and married the man of her choice when she was twenty-four. It seemed an unlikely match, for Nate Neakok was an Iñupiaq hunter with no formal education. Sadie became his link to the Outside non-native world and he in turn taught Sadie "how to be an Eskimo all over again." As the wife of a hunter and whaling captain, Sadie has been actively involved publicly as well as privately with subsistence issues affecting the native people of the North Slope. In addition to rearing a very large family and teaching school, Sadie has been a state welfare worker in Barrow, census taker for the North Slope area, and the first mayor of Barrow. Her greatest impact upon her community, however, has been in her role as "farthest north judge," Barrow's Magistrate, a position she held from 1960 until her retirement twenty years later.

Clad in a blue velveteen fancy parka which she made herself, hands clasped behind her back after the fashion of Iñupiat women who have carried a lifetime of small children on their backs, Sadie Brower Neakok walked through the doors of Barrow High School on August 14, 1984 as a participant in an archaeology/oral history field school organized by my husband, Edwin S. Hall, Jr., and myself for the North Slope Borough school district. Sadie was one of

two elders selected to be interviewed by high school students in the oral history portion of the project; during a two week period in August, the twelve students and I interviewed Sadie about her life and the recent history of Barrow, collecting some seventeen hours of tape recorded interviews. Her life stody proved so compelling and Sadie such an interested participant that she and I decided to further pursue the project with the idea of publishing her account as a book. During the summers of 1985, 1986, and 1987 Sadie and I compiled an additional thirty-one hours of taped interviews.

Given the brevity of our acquaintance, my relationship with Sadie Neakok and her family was very different from my relationship with Florence Davidson. I met members of Sadie's family for the first time in 1985 and have spent no time in their company; similarly, I profess only a passing acquaintance with Barrow and the North Slope sociocultural landscape. My window on Sadie's daily life and household was the two to three hours I spent each afternoon at her kitchen table for our interview sessions.

It is, however, implicit in anthropological life history research just as it is in biographical research that one know the "times" and cultural context of the individual life. In Florence's case I had come to know that context and those times through months of research in her community and study of the abundant ethnohistorical material from missionary and government records. Several sources aided me in my attempt to understand the cultural-historical context of Sadie's story despite my lack of ethnographic research in her community. I conducted interviews with key people in the legal profession who have known her in her role as Magistrate in order to flesh out that aspect of her life. Insight into Sadie's familial past as well as a personalized view of early Barrow is provided by the voluminous writings of Charles Brower, Sadie's father. In addition to several articles and his well-known memoir, Fifty Years Below Zero (1942), he left behind a 900 page typewritten autobiography, correspondence, and other writings now housed at Dartmouth College Library.

Telling the Lives of Women

The cumulative record of native women's autobiography/life history looks slim beside that of native men. For example, of the forty-nine life history accounts of Eskimos listed by David Brumble in his American Indian and Eskimo autobiographies (1981), only twelve are of women. Florence Davidson's account is the first published life history of a Northwest Coast Indian woman, joining the ranks of several well known life histories of Northwest Coast men. The resurgent interest in the phenomenon of native women's autobiography is reflected in both the growing literature about the subject and in increasing research and publication of life history works on native women (e.g. Baitelle and Sands 1984; Geiger 1986). Anthropological works are paralleled by the growing field of feminist biography, which has looked at a diversity of women's experience and continues to seek new ways to present, analyze, and understand that experience.

Many problems face students of native women's life history. More than one ethnographer has commented on women's mutedness, attributing their lack of voice to women's positions within the social structure or conversely blaming the problem on the anthropologist who has accepted the former explanation as dogma and thus conducts research accordingly (Young 1983). Others have identified historical factors in the silence of native women, noting that with the arrival of Europeans, native history and native women of the past were seen through the written records of Euro-American men -- a history twice distilled, or twice distorted (Mitchell and Franklin 1984). It is in this respect noteworthy that both Florence and Sadie are the daughters of famous fathers and little known mothers. Charlie Edenshaw's name is invariably mentioned in any discussion of Haida art, and he and his work have been the subject of numerous publications. (Was Isabella Edenshaw -- a master basket weaver -- any less an artist in her own right?) Charles Brower earned a far flung reputation as the northern-most American, host to explorers and scholars, a skilled commercial whaler and trader, and a font of knowledge about the arctic. He is quoted in many scholarly works on the Alaskan arctic, and his own life story is known through publication of his memoirs (Brower 1942).

The silence of women in men's documents is nowhere better exemplified than in Charles Brower's autobiography. What we know of his wife, Asianggataq, comes from the accounts of her children. From Sadie I learned

that her mother's parents, originally from Shismaref and King Island (in Alaska's Seward peninsula region), were migrating north at the time of her birth. Left to die as a newborn with her mother who succumbed in childbirth, she was rescued by an older brother returning from a hunting expedition. He named her Asianggataq, "a sweet berry," and raised her. Asianggataq in time married a man from Utkiagvik (Barrow) and bore a daughter. When her husband died from measles in 1902, she was hired by Charles Brower to care for his four children who had just lost their mother in the same epidemic. Brower married his babysitter in 1904 and over the next twenty-five years she bore him ten children. The skinny Asianggataq was affectionately dubbed "Bones" by Brower, and became "Mary" when her daughters needed a name for her that could be spelled by the white school teachers. Like other Iñupiat women, Asianggataq instructed her daughters in skin sewing and other female duties, but as well she had her own large dog team and, in this community of whaling men, she oversaw her own whaling crews. "Mom could do most anything," Sadie exclaimed; "She could shoot a gun and get her own game." She taught her sons and daughters to hunt and fish and lived a somewhat independent life from her white husband, going off in the summertime to camp while he kept the store. She ate her Eskimo style meals with her native friends while Brower and the children dined on white man's fare at his trading station. Mary Brower was also a public-spirited woman. Regularly, with her husband's approval, she raided the shelves of his Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Company in order to feed Barrow's needy. Despite these humanitarian efforts and the ten prominent sons and daughters she bore and reared, Asianggataq merits not a single word in Charles Brower's 900 page autobiography (Brower n.d.). Neither does Sadie, whose achievements went beyond even the high aspirations her father had to her. Brower's failure to acknowledge Sadie is perhaps more easily explainable as he was not in the habit of mentioning any of his children until they were old enough to accompany him on his periodic trips Outside, and then he notes them only in passing. The author-self of The Northernmost American is a man's man, his story a man's adventure tale. Charlie Brower writes copiously of the whales he took during his quarter century as an active whaler, of the personalities of his favorite dogs, of the many -- some famous -- Outsiders who passed through his whaling station, of his Iñupiat hunting companions, of his travels in the arctic and in the civilized country Outside, but not of his Barrow family nor his relationship with them. Oddly enough, perhaps, he dedicated the published version of his autobiography to "My devoted wife, my fine sons and wonderful daughters" (Brower 1942:vi).

In some cases the silences of Native women may be further perpetuated by women themselves who have accepted as appropriate the dogma of their silence. In Alaska, the Yukon/Koyukuk school district several years ago commissioned a series of life histories of native people to be written for use in the district's schools. Only four of the sixteen booklets in this life history series, however, feature women, a bias the editors/interviewers acknowledged and attempted to rectify. Life history subjects for the series were selected by several means, ranging from village council elections to school committees, but despite the fact that most of the representatives of the selection bodies were women, few women were chosen to be featured in the books.

Fortunately, neither Sadie Neakok nor Florence Davidson are silent, nor were they silent before an anthropologist provided a vehicle for the telling of their life stories. As prominent women in their respective communities, neither was surprised that an outsider would want to document her life history. Although Florence once remarked, "It could be so interesting if I lied," she didn't really think of herself or her life as "ordinary." While both Florence and Sadie elected not to discuss certain topics, neither was reluctant to relate her life story and neither balked at its publication. Sadie, in fact, saw the publication of her life story as an opportunity to complete the process begun by her father in the writing of his autobiography.

Florence Davidson and Sadie Neakok: Patterns and Parallels

At first glance the differences between Florence's and Sadie's life experiences seem more striking than the parallels. Sadie Neakok comes from a bicultural family, and Florence Davidson does not. Sadie has had extensive involvement in the world outside Barrow begin-

ning with her high schooling in San Francisco and culminating with her judicial position. Although Florence has regularly travelled outside her island home, her education and her window on the world are much narrower than Sadie's. Sadie has been a public servant and community leader, crusading for social changes such as improved sanitation and better educational materials. She has also served as a cultural broker for her people, adapting and explaining an alien legal system, introducing social security and income tax forms. Florence's public role has been a far more traditionally female one. There are striking differences, too, in the telling of her stories. Florence speaks much more of family and other kin relations while Sadie's family appears as a backdrop to her busy public life. Florence's story is more circumspect and couched in euphemism, in part because it emerges from a cultural context where social etiquette is so essential. By contrast Sadie's story is outspoken and direct, a comfortable story related before in other public contexts.

The similarities in their life patterns, however, are more significant than the obvious differences. Sadie, after reading a copy of Florence's life history that I had given her, concluded, "She and I went through about the same thing only she's an Indian and I'm Eskimo."

The sheer physical endurance of these two women is evident in their reproductive histories. Each had thirteen children (fourteen pregnancies) -- Florence over a period of twenty-six years and Sadie in twenty-two. The comments of both women on being so often pregnant were accepting and matter-of-fact, though Sadie had to make more adaptations because of her professional life -- rescheduling a judicial seminar or a trip Outside when she was due to deliver yet another child. Florence, more confined by her children than Sadie, noted how much she relished getting out of the house at times to help prepare for a feast or attend choir practice; yet summers she travelled to canneries to work and to the Haida's fish camps accompanied by her large brood. Sadie hired a babysitter while she worked outside the home but she also brought the outside world into her domestic realm, holding arraignments at her kitchen table after shooing her small children into the other room. Family obligations, much more so than in the case of men, affected career choices: Sadie gave up teaching when her full-time babysitter's costs consumed her entire week's paycheck, and later when urged by the Presbyterian minister to attend seminary to study for the ministry, she somewhat reluctantly declined, noting that her family needed her at home. Family also took these women's time from other activities. Florence lamented that childcare responsibilities afforded her no opportunity when she was younger to learn the songs and traditions her husband only later imparted to her. And Sadie, encouraged by various people to write a sequel to her father's memoirs, remarked, "I could never find time to sit down long enough, especially when the kids were smaller. My time was just absorbed in family and village." Neither could she steal the odd moment to sit down and tape her memoirs on the tapes and tape recorder sent her by the University of Alaska, so she returned them.

With large families comes never ending provisioning. In both women's homes I found myself conducting interviews surrounded by loaves of freshly baked bread, and at Sadie's our afternoon interviews were cirucmscribed by meal preparations for her still large household. "That's an endless job," Sadie remarked of her family. "And from April on, it's a busy, busy time, because the men are out hunting and they are forever bringing in their catches. Mealtime is a free-for-all for everybody. They gang up on me. Get off work...'Mom, what you got for supper? You got enough if we come?' 'Sure, always enough for everybody." The ceremonial obligations in both Inupiat and Haida cultures also require provisioning on a large scale by groups of women: in Florence's case, the organization and cooking for large feasts attended by 100-500 guests; in Sadie's world, as the wife of a whaling captain, the providing of whale meat and maktak (whale blubber with skin) for the community at the annual Nalakutaq (whale feast) and at Thanksgiving and Christmas. For both women skills in provisioning led to employment outside the home: Florence was a cook for resident cannery workers. She also purveyed her baking into a part-time job conducted from her home -- making bread and pies for sale and, for a time during WW II, operating a small coffee shop out of her dining room. Sadie became the head cook for some 600 students and staff at Eklutna Residential school outside of Anchorage in the fall of 1935, and three years later found herself filling in during the summer for the recently departed cook at Barrow's hospital.

The community roles of both women brought them in frequent touch with death. Florence, for more than twenty years as president of the women's auxiliary of the Anglican church, tended to the village dead, preparing coffins, laying out bodies, calling on the bereaved. Sadie in her twenty years as coroner -- a duty of her Magistrate's position -- saw the most violent side of death: suicide, murder, airplane crash casualties. Yet her role bore similarities to Florence's; when an unidentified, unclaimed body washed out of a shallow grave and floated ashore, it was Sadie who made a new coffin, helped dig the grave, and saw the anonymous individual back to the earth with a prayer.

Religion has been an important force in the lives of Sadie Neakok and Florence Davidson and each has taken an active leading role in her church -- Florence in the traditional woman's role of president of the Women's Auxiliary of Masset's Anglican Church, Sadie breaking tradition as one of the first woman elders of the Utkiagvik Presbyterian church. Both commented on the importance of religion in their lives, and their faith has sustained them through many hard times, particularly the death of children (Sadie has lost two, Florence five).

Other parallels became evident as I studied their separate lives. Both women are achievement oriented and exceedingly hard workers. While Florence washed clothes until 3 a.m., Sadie was up just as late, filling out villagers' income tax forms at her kitchen table. Florence's "I tried all my best..." is echoed by Sadie's "It was really hard, but I kept at it..."

Both women were very close to and admiring of their fathers and both were considered tomboys as children. Charles Edenshaw had no direct male heirs, so Florence took on many of the tasks that a maternal nephew might have, like helping her father cut firewood. "I was a strong little girl," she reasoned. She was also his favorite child. Sadie's passion as a young child was to pack a shotgun and a lunch and heaf for the open tundra to hunt birds for her father's collection of natural history specimens which he sent on to the Denver Museum of Natural History. She candidly describes herself as an inveterate tomboy: "I could lick any boy my age who tried to bother my girlfriends." However, as adults, both women were confronted with male jobs which they were somewhat reluctant to assume. Florence took on the task of designing and painting the prow design on a Haida canoe someone had commissioned of her husband. But because it was highly unusual, even potentially shameful, for women to do -- and, particularly, fail at -- men's artistic work, to avoid ridicule she worked in the early morning hours before the villagers were up and about. When approached about accepting an appointment as Magistrate for Barrow in 1960, Sadie responded, "Well, gee, be a woman magistrate?" explaining, "I didn't think a woman's place was in the courthouse, so I didn't think too much about it." Nonetheless, like Florence she accepted the job, and, like Florence, performed it commendably.

For both Sadie and Florence an important connection to the traditions of their people was provided by their husbands who reintroduced them to forgotten parts of their native culture. Once their children were grown, Robert Davidson, Sr., taught Florence the songs and Haida oral traditions she had had no time to learn as a young mother. Sadie credits her hunter husband Nate with teaching her to be "an Eskimo all over again" following her sojourn outside for schooling.

Appropriately, both of these women have been honored by their communities. In the summer of 1985 Sadie's judicial work was recognized with the installation of a commemorative plaque at the dedication of the new Alaska Court System building in Barrow, and ten years before, the entire town had honored her with a "Sadie Neakok Day." On September 15, 1989 Florence was feted at a birthday feast attended by over 450 people and her 90th birthday was similarly celebrated in her community. Finally, in expressing their relatedness to their respective worlds, both women used a kinship metaphor: Reflecting on her role in educating Barrow people about the Outside world, "Sadie exclaimed, "Sometimes I think I'm the mother to this whole town;" and Florence, commenting on all the Outsiders who have found their way to her doorstep, remarked, "Everybody calls me Nani; I must be the world's nani (grandmother)."

It seemed both ironic and fitting that these two remarkable women who have so touched my life, shared, unbeknownst to them, a kinship relationship. In going through Sadie's scrapbook one summer, I discovered a newspaper clipping from 1969 announcing the marriage of Sadie's son to Florence's great niece (sister's son's daughter). The two women never met

each other and the marriage didn't last, but a significant connection between these two elders endures in my mind.

Discussion

To students of women's lives the parallels identified here are hardly surprising. The importance of children and family in directing women's lives, the provisioning, the emphasis on kinship connections, the turning to religion for inner strength, the ushering in of new life and the final disposition of those who have left it behind are common features of women's lives in many cultures. So, too, perhaps the connection between childhood as a tomboy and an adult life as a prominent woman.

It strikes me that this commonality of women's experience has been as important in shaping who these women are as the cultural, generational, and individual differences that make them unique individuals. I often think that, were Sadie and Florence to meet, not only would they like each other, but their common experience as women would provide the basis for a meaningful dialogue.

As important common denominator in these two life stories is, of course, the researcher. Behind both of these life accounts there is the anthropologist/interviewer asking questions, guiding in subtle ways the flow of information, editing and producing the final narrative. One may wonder to what extent the parallels in Sadie Neakok's and Florence Davidson's lives are attributable to either the collaborator's conscious or unconscious search for pattern and connectedness, or to the life history's subjects' similar reactions to the same personality. I, after all, selected both these women for reasons I have articulated -- and possibly for some I can't -- and they, to a certain extent, also selected me. Along the same lines, to what extent might previous life history research by a given researcher guide the structure of successive life histories authored by the same person? And, how much do the researcher's own life experiences direct life history interviewing? Finally, to what extent do current events impacting on on life history subject and interviewer inform and direct the relating of life experiences?

A life history is, by its very nature, a subjective enterprise. It is not just an attempt to understand the Other, but is, as Minnich (1985:303) writes of feminist biography, an effort to "comprehend ourselves in the world and the world in us, past and present, in new ways." It is therefore incumbent upon the researcher to reflect on the life history process, to ask questions about self, subject, and motivations and to determine how they inform the final product. I came to Florence Davidson's life history project very much in the role of an adult grandchild learning a grandmother's past, and not surprisingly I sought in her story something of my own grandmothers' experience as rural and small town women who devoted themselves to family and saw their children on to a better world. I saw the doing of Florence's life history in large part as reciprocity for all she had given me over the years of our collaboration. The project was an act of friendship, of love. Between Sadie and me there was less of a personal bond but an understanding on other levels. We appreciated each other in the mutual role of teachers -- she a long time school teacher and instructor of her people in myriad capacities, me a college professor for a time instructing high school students in her community, seeking to know her personal history and its relationship to the history of Alaska's North Slope. We related also as women whose careers were a dominant factor in our lives. I especially struggled to comprehend Sadke Neakok's incredible balancing of multiple careers and massive motherhood, which I found especially relevant in this area of women who want it all.

Whether it is a basic commonality of experience and/or the act of sharing that creates a bond between women anthropologist and life history subject, or whether the biographical process ultimately represents an endeavor to address our difficulty in knowing our own mothers as Chevigny (1983:80) believes, there is indeed something special about woman-to-woman life history research. Florence Davidson could not (and would not) have told her life story to a man. Discussion of her puberty seclusion, the awkwardness she felt at marrying an older man, the details of her pregnancies and births emcompassed topics and evoked feelings that could only be related to another woman. Sadie, I am fairly certain, could relate her life story to a man, but the final product would surely differ from the document that resulted from Sadie's and my collaboration. Recently I had an opportunity to compare

Sadie's life history with that of Waldo Bodfish, an Iñupiat elder from the North Slope of the community of Wainwright, Alaska, and was struck by a number of gender differences in the telling of their stories (Bodfish, Schneider, and Okakok n.d.). These differences are partly the result of different male and female patterns in Inupiat life story telling (a virtually unexplored subject), and partly due to Sadie's relating her life story to a female anthropologist and Waldo relating his to a male anthropologist (William Schneider). Although I have no doubt that Iñupiat males are less likely than Iñupiat females to talk of spouses and relationships, Waldo's obvious silence about his wife and family is at least partly attributable to the fact that Schneider asked few questions about wife and family, while Sadie and I probably talked more of family than she would had I not pursued this line of investigation.

The differences between myself and these women, as the differences between any life history subject and anthropologist pair, were also important to the relating, recording, and rendering of their life stories. Most obviously, there is no question that I am an outsider to both cultures though I probably seemed less strange to Sadie who has a greater familiarity with the Outside world than to Florence. In the introductory chapter to Florence's life history I reflected on how I thought she perceived me:

> *How strange I must sometimes seem to her, spending long periods of time far from home, traveling freely, childless at an age when I should have a large family of my own. "How's your big family," she often teases me when we talk long distance. I once asked her what I might do to show I had "respect for myself," an important Haida virtue. "Dress up and stay home," she retorted* (p.15).

Predictably Florence was both astounded and amused when I finally had my first child at age thirty-eight. This latter facet of my own experience, in turn, brought new revelations about how the author's experience can shape the biography/life history process. Had I experienced childbirth and the care of an infant prior to collecting Florence's life history, my questions of pregnancy, birth, and child care would have been not only more detailed but more meaningful as a result of having been informed by personal experience.

There are many permutations of women's life history research and writing that can and should be profitably explored. I have shared here some personal reflections on the narratives of two women who have not only provided me the opportunity to explore their life stories but have also enriched my own life. The growing literature on women's life stories offers a valuable resource for better understanding women's experience, particularly as it reaches across racial, ethnic, and generational lines. Susan Geiger said it well in her 1986 review essay on women's life histories:

> *...each woman's life history is important -- indeed precious -- and the act of record ing and publishing it is one of 'writing against the* wind'.

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ENDNOTES

1. Iñupiaq (Iñupiat, plural), sometimes written without the tilde, is a term of self-designation meaning "real" or "genuine" person used by North Alaskan Eskimos. The plural term is increasingly replacing the term "Eskimo". Inuit is the counterpart plural term in Arctic Canada and western Greenland.

2. A ceremonial distribution of property given by one of high rank to mark an important change in status such as the assumption of a chieftainship, the naming of a child, marriage, etc.

3. The Eskimo of Alaska's northwestern and northern coastal areas hunt the bowhead whale.

4. A practice resorted to if the family could not feed or raise the newborn and no one came forward to adopt it.

5. His manuscript ends before he took Sadie Outside to San Francisco to school in 1930.

6. In this matrilineal society, a man's heirs were his sister's sons.

7. There is some discrepancy as to whether Florence was born in 1895 or 1986 (the missionary records indicate the latter; her uncle's genealogy, the former). I had accepted the church records when I wrote Florene's life history. When plans were underway for her 90th birthday party in 1984 Florence realized that it had been scheduled a year early, but she was advised by her best friend not to worry and to enjoy the celebration while whe was still healthy. Consequently, her 95th birthday party was held five years following her 90th.

8. Most striking was Waldo's framing of his life in respect to hunting and travelling the land. Significant people in his life (parents, wife, children) as well as marker events (marriage, death of his father, etc.) were all tied to subsistence activities. Hunting, trapping, and travelling the land were all described in far greater detail than relationships with people. Sadie's account lacked this focus on subsistence, though subsistence activites were very much a part of her story.