

Ułchena Bada Huch'ilyut

'Where We Gave Ourselves the Alutiiq People's Skin Boats.'

**Shem Pete told this story on November 11th, 1977,
and his son Billy Pete translated it.**

**Kirk Gallardo, Education Interpretation Manager at the Anchorage Museum
provided transcription support for turning the original audio file of the translation
into this written format.**

The story I will be telling today is the battle at Ułchena Bada Huch'ilyut, or 'Where we Gave Ourselves the Alutiiq People's Skin Boats.' Shem Pete told this story on November 11th, 1977, and his son Billy Pete translated it.

Alutiiqs, the Alutiiqs declared war on a rich man's son. That's the story I'm going to tell. Well, the rich man's son got married, and one time, they loaded the boat with hunting gear, and he told his wife, "Let's go hunting." and they went hunting. The Matanuska River up there someplace. When it was getting dark, they made a camp. They camp right at the edge of the water. They made a camp by the river they had wars all the time with the Alutiiq, so they kept watch out for the Alutiiqs. He made a camp where he could save his life. He put his canoe by the water and propped it up toward the water. He propped the canoe up by the creek with a little stick. Toward morning, at the break of daylight, they heard the Alutiiqs out there. They surrounded the camp. They surrounded the camp, and he told his wife "I am going to leave you. Those Alutiiqs don't kill women. I'm going to leave you. Just surrender yourself to them. Don't fight with them." He told his wife. He told her this so she could save her life too. And when the Alutiiqs got right close to them, he jumped up and grabbed the top of the canoe, and the canoe dropped into the water near him. He jumped in the water, and the canoe fell on top of him. He swam away, out into the middle of the river under the canoe. He dove underneath the water and swam out. He surfaced in the middle of the river, took a deep breath, and swam across. When he got right close to the shore, he started swimming on top of the water and ran out on the flats. He had a rope around his waist and his tunic in back of him, and just a loincloth. He put that back on after he wrung out all the water. From the Matanuska River to Knik, there is a big flat. He ran all the way back home to Knik.

Early in the morning, his dad would always sit at the Knik Arm bank and stand guard against the Alutiiqs. Early in the morning, they always watch for the Alutiiqs. They were always at war, and there were always a lot of Alutiiqs. Out on the flat, his boy was running, and he saw him. He knew his boy was coming back like a bird coming toward him. He ran back inside the big nichit, the 'Big House,' and he told his people. "Go out there and take a look. Looks like something is out there." He told them. "It looks like a swarm flying this way." His people ran out to the bank and looked. They got a look, and they recognized that man, and they ran back to the big nichit and told the chief, "Your boy is coming back." That boy ran back inside. "They took my wife." he said, and "when I made a camp, I put my canoe toward the water and propped it up, when they got too close, I jumped up and

grabbed the gunnel and jumped over the canoe and the canoe dropped on top of me, and I dove down underneath the canoe and swam out. Way out in the middle of the river, I surfaced. I kept trying and trying, and I came out on this side. I knew that they couldn't get ahold of me, so I came back here. I knew I had to save my life. I knew that." "Hurry up! Get Ready!" he told them. "Those Alutiiqs got my wife. Let's search for them." He told them. "We're going to go get them." "Good." They told him.

They were always ready for war, and they got ready for war. They looked and looked for them, and the Alutiiqs were drifting down on the other side of Knik Arm in their badis, their skin boats. They, the Knik Dena'ina, were always ready. That Ship Creek in Anchorage, they used to call it Stickleback Creek, Dgheyaytnu. When the Alutiiqs got that far, the Knik people all went across the Knik River. Those Dena'ina went across and they were following those Alutiiqs on the dry land. They were following them on the land over there; it might have been over there by Nuch'ishtunt, Point Woronzof. Those Alutiiqs landed over there by Nuch'ishtunt. They ran short of water, and one guy had a Hagi, a Spruce root basket, in his mouth, and he ran along the bank like an animal. He was looking for spring water. He had the hagi in his mouth, and he ran up the bank and was following the bank looking for water. He was crawling like an animal and using his other leg like a tail, and he ran up the bank. He was running along the bank, and he found a little spring water and he got the water. He had that hagi in his mouth. He ran back to the badis and he brought water back to them. They got tired and went to sleep.

That woman was with the Alutiiq chief. That rich Alutiiq kept watch at nighttime, and in the daytime, he slept. He kept watch all the time for the Dena'ina, and when it got daylight those Alutiiq went to sleep. They were tired, and they all laid down. Just the qeshqa, the rich man, was sitting up with that woman. That woman knew that her husband was close by, and she told that old man, that chief, "Let me look in your hair for bugs." That woman knew her husband was going to show up anytime soon. "Let me look in your hair." She said. That woman was sitting down with her legs outstretched, and she took Alutiiq's chief's head and placed it in her lap. She would find the bugs and kill them for him. She was looking all over, looking for her husband. Right close to her, her husband stuck his head out, and she saw him right away. When she saw her husband, she motioned to him with her hand to 'get down, get down.' She was looking for bugs in the Alutiiq's chief's hair. She kept motioning to her husband with her hand which way to go. She kept motioning with her hand to go this way, to go that way. That woman knew the lay of the land, and she motioned to him the hollow places behind the little hills or humps. Her husband got real close to them, just a couple of jumps, maybe twenty feet. That man motioned to his wife with his hands what to do when he got close. He motioned to his wife, 'Take the man's head and put it in between your legs and hold it between your legs with your hands and your legs together.' He knew that the Alutiiq chief was going to hear him, so he couldn't talk. He just motioned to her with his hand.

She was looking through his hair for bugs, and all of a sudden, she grabbed his head and put it between her legs. With her hands and legs, she clamped down on him. She put that Alutiiq chief's head between her legs and clamped down real tight. As soon as that woman did that, he jumped right up, and he ran over there. He grabbed his head, raised it back and cut his throat, and killed him. That Dena'ina chief's boy motioned to his people, and they all ran down like a flood. They killed all the Alutiiqs, and there were two fifteen or sixteen-year-old Alutiiqs that they saved. They took those two young Alutiiqs; they told them, "Go home! Send a lot more people than this! Again,

call some other people! Lots of them! Let lots of Alutiiqs come so they can kill us too!" They sent a message by them. And they went home, those Alutiiqs.

That Turnagain Arm, they went up that way. They followed that Turnagain Arm to its head. They kept walking and walking and having a hard time, and pretty soon, they got back on the Portage Glacier and started over the mountain. They were crossing the glacier, one of the boys fell into a crevasse, just only one was left. He was crying, going home by himself. He cried and cried and cried. His lungs were all full of pain from crying so much, and then he came home. "What's the matter? What's the matter? Where's the rest of the company?" They asked him. He rubbed his hands together. He rubbed them together indicating that there was nobody left. He rubbed his foot on the ground, uh, so that they could understand him. But they couldn't understand. There were so many Alutiiqs. They couldn't figure out that they, how they would kill all of them. He tried to talk and he couldn't. He cried so long and hard, and all that crying tore up his lungs. The last one fell down and died. That last one died. That's all. That's all I'm going to tell you. That's it. Over there at at Utchena Bada Huch'ilyut where they killed all the Alutiiqs. Those boats, the Dena'ina took all those badis, those boats. Those Knik people over there. The Knik people gave themselves the badis or the boats. They called it at Utchena Bada Huch'ilyut, 'Where we Gave Ourselves the badis.'

That's enough. I've told you enough.