Watkins, Helen Abbott

Helen Abbott Watkins Photograph Collection

PCA 563

Digital format only
1 album – 155 digital images
   120 color photos, 33 b&w photos,
   2 news clippings
1 interview, audio recording

Processed by: Anastasia Tarmann, July 2013
Revised by: Jacki Swearingen, June 2017


ACCESS: The collection is unrestricted.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

PROCESSING: This collection is in digital format and has been described at the item level. Original order of the photograph album has been maintained. Identifying notes are from photo versos, notes in the album, and Helen Abbott Watkins’ clarifications.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Helen Abbott Watkins was born in 1939 to Lilly (Klannott, born to James and Mary White, daughter of Anna White/ Woo Tu [sp?]) and John Allen Abbott in Haines Alaska. Mary White’s sibling was Joe White, head of the Thunderbird Clan and a highliner fisherman. Helen spent six years in the Seward Sanitarium with TB, from age nine. Lilly Klannott Abbott raised 10 children; Helen is the ninth child. Helen’s father died two months before she turned five. George Walter Abbott, Clara Kathleen Abbott Mattson and Helen are alive of the siblings. The family lived in the area where the Federal Building is now, where stood a ball park. Mattson’s fishing supply was across the street, as was a Presbyterian church, attended by Helen and other native people.

Because of the amount of time she spent in the hospital as a child with TB and Scarlet Fever, Helen received a patchy education. In 1971, she obtained her GED. Here first job at age 16, was for Haines Packing Co., a cannery. Workers received $300.00 for the season without overtime, with an average workday of 14 hours, since all the fish that came in needed to be processed each day. Her mother worked at the cannery also, in charge of the iron chink, two blades that cut the heads off. They salvaged and ate the heads. A van picked up the workers, mostly women. In summer, they tanned seal skin and preserved fish. In winter, they sewed, making booties, moccasins, and souvenirs from seal and deer for ANAC (Alaska Native Arts Cooperative) cache. They often worked all night $2.35 per pair to make the quota by Friday each week, under what Helen remarks were sweat-shop conditions.

Information for this biographical notes section is from a recorded interview with Helen Abbott Watkins on July 9, 2013 (See folder 2). Other photographs of Lilly Abbott Nigh and “Mrs. Klannot” regarding skin sewing are located in the Don Burrus Photograph Collection (PCA 466). Some may be viewed on Alaska’s Digital Archives at: http://vilda.alaska.edu/. See image numbers: ASL-P466-02-063-1, ASL-P466-02-063-2, and ASL-P466-02-071.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE


INVENTORY

(Numbering matches tifs in Photographs (V:) drive)

1 Mary Abbott, Helen Anna Abbott (age 7), Dolly Kay Abbott, George Katzeek, Jr.
2 Lilly Nigh’s cabin, Haines
3 Dolly, [Mary?, and Helen, Port of Seattle?]
4 My mom, Lilly Nigh. My mom, age 17: Mrs. John Abbott. Presently, Mrs. W.E. Nigh
“Pop” John Abbott

Helen and youngest sister, Dolly, age 9

Great grandma Annie White: Mrs. Annie Willis White, Ku-xa-day-ouh Dalth-cu-thlu-steen.

[Lilly Nigh gutting a fish]

My Great grandma Anna White—great uncle Joe’s mother’s uncle. Mary White Klannot’s mother. Photo taken at Carr’s Cove in Haines

Great grandma Anna White, Thunder bird House. Grandma, Sophia, Jerry.

Grandma Mary White, daughter of Anna White

[Grandma Mary Klannott]


Uncle Joe White, son of Anna White and Karla Johnson.

Son of Anna White, Joe White, Brother of Mary White, with wife Annie

5 generations (left): Jenny, Cookie, Mom, Anna White, Mary Klannott, James Klannott

Grandpa James Klannott [in regalia with unidentified young man]

[Grandpa James Klannott (b&w photo)]

Left; Leonard Davis, Great grandma Anna White Davis, my mom Lilly Nigh, my stepdad Bill, my sister Dolly, me holding Danny Katzeek

My brothers; left: Charlie, Georgie, Tommy, Dog Sheila

Mom and Bill: Lilly and William Earl Nigh [on car in front of house-in Haines?]


Georgie Walter Abbott in Haines AK, Carr’s Cove

Sister, Clara; bother. Georgie; sister, Martha

Mom and Bill, Georgie on boat
26  Tommy, Charlie, Johnnie, Daddy Bill, Georgie
27  Bill gave away two daughters, May 24, 1958: Helen and Sam, and Clara and Lee.
28  Grandma Mary, Grandpa James Klannott, Joe Sheakley, Richard Sheakley, Larry
29  Helen, Cookie, Vicky, Dolly [In water]
30  Family gathering [1]
31  Family gathering [2]
32  Dolly, Mom, Mrs. Willie Lee
33  Elsie, Cookie Westmen, Mom, Bill
34  Grandma Mary
35  My youngest daughter, Lonnie, with her great grandma Mary
36  Mom/ Lilly [tending fire outdoors]
37  Mom/ Lilly [in kitchen]
38  Helen worming fish line Haines Packing Co.
39  [Helen on boat]
40  [Grandma]
41  My mom, my grandma
42  Work day, pulling net off the boat. Right [Left?] : Freddie Philips. Middle: Tommy Abbott. Right: Jay Shepheard.
43  Lilly B, boat
44  Our boat Thumper J, left: Lilly B, right: Baby Doll
45  Cars Cove, Haines, AK
46  Mending Gillnet
47  Mending Gillnet
48  Bill with big catch!
49  Mom and bill. Left: Dolly, me
50  Taken down the beach at Haines, summer 1955. Mom, Bill, Tommy
51  Taken at our family picnic July 7, 1957, at Big boulder, Haines. Bill, Mom, Dolly, Mike
Mann, Helen
52  My sister Martha’s Birthday. Evelyn Hotch, Luise Hammond, Dorthy Hammond, Mom,
Mary, Martha, Jenny, Cookie, Dolly, Chris
53  Mom going to fish camp on the ferry
54  Work day! Dolly and Helen. [Doing laundry with pedal gas powered washer and tub]
55  [Similar to above (b&w)].
56  [Lilly Nigh’s cabin in Haines, near cannery. The cabin was abandoned by U.S. military]
57  Fish camp
58  [Lilly’s cabin]
59  Helen, Karla Jean Johnson, Sam (Jay) Johnson, [in front of cabin]
60  Our cabin at Haines, Alaska, 1955 [Cabin and Sam]
61  Wash days [Helen or Dolly washing cabin windows, 1955]
62  Wash days [Helen or Dolly hanging wash on a line at shoreline]
63  Wash days [Lilly by laundry line at shoreline]
64  Sunny days--Helen and Dolly [in bathing suits]
65  [Lilly Nigh, taking a break at fish camp]
66  Bill Nigh, Lilly Klanott Abbott Nigh, Helen Abbott Johnson Stringer Watkins  [Preparing
salmon for smoking]
67  It takes the whole family: Charlie, Helen, Mom, Ann Abbott [preparing salmon]
68  It takes the whole family: Charlie, Bill, Mom, Ann Abbott [preparing salmon]
69  Helen and Lilly [and Mrs. File preparing salmon]
70  [Helen, Lilly and Sam preparing salmon]
71 Helen [preparing salmon]
72 [Helen and Lilly washing salmon in ocean or river]
73 [Bill Nigh on boat]
74 [Bill Nigh on boat]
75 Helen Johnson…1 month pregnant with [Sam] Jay [film developed October 1960]
76 Helen Johnson…1 month pregnant, [film developed October 1960]
77 Fishing for a living
78 Wash the boat out
79 “Bill” no fish [no image]
80 Larger duplicate of #69
81 Making smoked fish [cutting into sections]
82 Making smoked fish [cutting into sections]
83 Making smoked fish [Lilly in smokehouse]
84 Making smoked fish [Helen in smokehouse]
85 [Lilly inside the smokehouse]
86 [Inside the smokehouse]
87 [Helen inside the smokehouse]
88 Mom’s smokehouse [Inside the smokehouse]
89 Tanya, Kali, Malichi, Amanda, Kayla, Isaiah, Jordan, Brandy
90 Helen, Karla, Tanya with child, 2002
91 Lilly Nigh and Mrs. File, Pastor’s wife [cutting salmon]
92 Sam Johnson Jr., Mom [Lilly], Karla, 1977 [putting fish pieces on a stick to smoke?]
93 Karla, Mom [Lilly], Sam Johnson, Jr.
94 Mom [Lilly], Sam Jr. Jay Johnson, Aug. 1977
95  Karla, Tanya, Amanda, Brandi’s mom[?], Aug. 1977 [Karla and the fish are visible in the photo]
96  [Michael Earl Mann and father? with very large fish]
97  Michael Earl Mann, my nephew, Jeanette Mann’s son [with very large fish]
98  My Mom picking high bush cranberries
99  [Lilly Picking high bush cranberries]
100 Lonnie beating soap berries
101 Soap berry queen
102  [Helen with a bowl of soapberries in water]
103  Soapberry stalks
104  [Interior of Lilly’s fish camp cabin in Haines]
105  [Interior of fish camp cabin]
106  [Interior of fish camp cabin]
107  My cousin Darleen: our mom’s are sisters [Inside fish camp cabin]
108  [Helen inside fish camp cabin]
109  [Helen inside fish camp cabin]
110  [Helen inside fish camp cabin]
111  [Interior of fish camp cabin]
112  We made it! On our beach in Haines Carr’s Cove. Cousins Helen Watkins, Darleen Sheakley Betz
113  My son, 1972. My #1 son, Jay, Sam Johnson
114  Fireweed
115  Bill, Canning fish
116  Georgie, Bill, Johnnie, Charlie, Tommy
117  [Haines cabin and shoreline, processed November, 1973]
118  [Haines cabin and shoreline]
119  [Haines cabin and shoreline]
120  [Haines cabin and shoreline]
121  Moonlight at Carr’s Cove
122  [Haines cabin and shoreline]
123  Back of my shack [Haines?]
124  [Haines shoreline]
125  Mom weaving [basket]
126  Happy days in Haines with my mom
127  [Lilly Nigh, Haines]
128  Jay Sam Johnson, Jr., Kenny [and?] Lloyd Jackson [Haines]
129  Christine, Cookie, Helen
130  Play time! Cookie and Helen
131  Rainy days! My girls, Karla and Lonnie, and Chuck Ramage
132  Sewing the net [Helen and Chuck Ramage]
133  Helen and daughter Karla, Klukwan
134  Play time! Lonnie
135  Obituary for Lilly Klannott Nigh. December 17, 1983
136  Obituary for Joseph A. White, August 24, 1983
137  Lonnie, Kayla,[ ?], Jordan [Interior of Lilly Nigh’s cabin]
138  [Interior of Lilly Nigh’s cabin]
139  [Interior of Lilly Nigh’s cabin]
140  [Interior of Lilly Nigh’s cabin]
[Dog and fishing net on shore]

[Dog running toward camera outside the cabin]

Mom and Bill Nigh, June 1, 1991--25 years

[Haines, winter, with boat and net at shore]

Lonnie Johnson and Helen Watkins [1980s?]

Ready to split after Thunder Bird House party, June 1972 [Helen wearing back pack]

[Carved Thunder Bird]

Inside our Thunder Bird House

Inside our Thunder Bird House

Inside our Thunder Bird House

Lonnie, Mom Lilly Kannott Abbott Nigh, Lilly White, Aunt Anna Katzeek [in regalia]

Bill Nigh, George Katzeek, Sr. [in regalia]

[Postcard: Old Cannery at Letnicoff Cove…]

[Preparing fish for smoke house] Helen and Jeanette

[Preparing fish for smoke house] Jenny Mann, my sister

**Interview with Helen Abbott Watkins, July 9, 2013.**

Helen describes her family and growing up, cannery work, sewing for ANAC cache, fish camp, seal tanning, her various jobs babysitting for a radio announcer among others, cleaning the governor’s mansion, and working at REACH, Head Start. She talks about her life in Juneau and Haines with three children during the 1950s through 1980s.