

**Call number: 00-00-178-07**

**Jerry Campbell is interviewed by an unidentified person in Fairbanks, Alaska on an unknown date.**

**Summary created by: Summer Dougherty**

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**Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master and circulation copies on CD.**

This is an interview with Jerry Campbell who works for H.E. Goldberg & Co in Seattle, WA. Jerry is based in Seattle but he travels, buying fur, 7 months out of the year throughout Alaska and 5 or 6 northwestern states: usually Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Utah. There is heavy trapping activity in all of these states and all over the west. The interview asks if the furs in those states are the same as the furs in Alaska. Jerry says that some are the same or similar and some are different; there are many species that are found in Alaska that are not found in the lower western states and vice versa.

As an example, lynx are not found in the lower 48 but are found in Canada and Alaska. This year lynx has been the primary focus of trappers in Alaska due to the market advance that has been higher than ever before.

In the lower 48, beaver, muskrat, otter, lynxcats, coyotes, mink in large quantities, both ranch raised and wild, and some amounts of red fox and cross fox predominate.

The majority of Jerry's travel is in Washington and Oregon which is conducted through November, December, January and parts of February. March and April, usually to the first of May, is spent in Alaska. In Alaska, Jerry is based primarily in Fairbanks. He travels up and down the Yukon River. He normally goes as far west as Nulato and as far east as Chalkyitsik. He goes up and down the highway to the Canadian border and the Glennallen area, down to Nenana. He flies out to Minto and some of the villages that are close to Fairbanks.

Jerry has methods of getting word to the villages so that trappers in the villages have time to prepare the skins. Word is carried through the various contacts and bush pilots. "Some trappers carry it through the famous mukluk telegraph." Sometimes he goes in without any advance warning but there are usually furs to be bought at any time during the season.

Usually Jerry does not make frequent reports to the Seattle office, but just makes a shipment of furs once he has enough. Changes in market conditions are usually reported to Jerry by the Seattle office. Jerry sometimes contacts the Seattle office for guidance when he encounters problems with trappers asking a high price for their furs, so that Jerry can know whether to meet the prices.

The interview asks what type of furs Jerry is looking for in Alaska now. Jerry responds that when he comes to Alaska in the spring, the height of the beaver season, he is primarily looking for beaver. There are still considerable amounts of lynx around. Portions of the lynx now are past prime. Many

substandard skins start showing up toward the end of the season. Jerry buys all furs of any description but beaver is the primary fur and muskrat is secondary as they are just starting to come into quantity now. All furs have do have market value so Jerry attempts to buy anything that the trapper might have, whatever it is worth.

Jerry buys beaver pelts that have been stretched and dried. He prefers them to be stretched round, not oval. The interviewer asks whether the skins have excessive grease or if they have been very well washed. Jerry responds that he discourages handling of this type of skin and in fact discount for it and advise the trapper that he can receive better process for his skins if he handles them better.

The snare is a more popular trap for beavers in Alaska. The pelt can be damaged by the snare if the beaver is not immediately drowned and struggles, damaging the fur. This does not normally happen with an animal caught in a steel trap. The steel trap in some area is superior but does not lend itself for use very well in Alaska because of weather conditio0ns and other factors.

There are three grades of quality for beaver pelts: first, second and third quality based on quality of the fur and degrees of damage or perfection.

During the season the price for furs may remain relatively constant or may fluctuate. This varies every year. This year, Jerry is enjoying a very high market. This may change, though. Many other markets can have influence because there is a limited number of dollars within the fur industry which are allotted to buying various types of fur. When a quantity of fur appears in the market in any place in the world, in can have a result of what is to be paid in the future. In some instances there is unlimited demand and not sufficient quantity to satisfy the demand and prices are driven up. In other cases, species are produced in quantity such that, sooner or later, it will overshadow the amount of investment dollars available. As an example there have been some downward trends in lynx, which reached all-time highs in midwinter. Foxes are starting to decline somewhat, but this is based on the quality of the furs, as most foxes are past prime by now.

The interviewer asks what trappers that have skins from the earlier part of the year do. Jerry responds that there are buyers who operate in Alaska all year long. Some trappers prefer to work with these buyers while other trappers prefer to ship to a more primary market. Jerry's company receives shipments all year long as do other companies. Trappers can ship their furs to Seattle using parcel post but they can be shipped by air parcel post or air freight. Trucking is generally too slow because market conditions can change so quickly.

H.E. Goldberg & Co. collects furs from trappers in small quantities, accumulate them in their warehouse, reassort them and combine all the purchases into one lot per species according to grade. Most customers would not be in a position to buy directly from trappers as they are generally interested in buying a specific fur of a specific size and/or grade in quantity. Eighty to eighty-five percent of H.E. Goldberg & Co. business is done with European accounts: Italy, Germany, England, Switzerland, Spain and France. Another 10% is done with Canadian accounts, particularly on the east coast around Montreal where the big manufacturing centers are located. The other will probably stay 5% stay in the

United States. The United States fur industry is more interested in ranch raised mink than wild furs. This may be changing. Europe makes high style furs and, recently, fun furs.

H.E. Goldberg & Co. sells the furs raw, just as they buy them. There is a large duty to export dressed furs into Europe. Importing into Europe in the raw state involves low or no duties.

Public auctions take place in Seattle and could be attended by anyone but are attended by primary buyers from throughout the world. The auction sales consist of both ranch raised mink and wild furs.

Jerry says that no one can forecast in very far in advance what a coming season's market will be. His advice to all trappers would be is, around November, to get into contact with as many fur outlets as possible and get price lists to determine what is going on in the current market and to gauge their activities accordingly. Many trappers, particularly in Alaska, tend to be isolated from current information and sometimes over trap or under trap in absolute reverse of what the market conditions are.

The interviewer asks if having more current information would have helped trappers this year with regard to lynx. Jerry said it would have in the beginning, but the prices changed dramatically as the season went on. There were constant raises from November clear into February. The prices went up every week, practically. This was an unusual situation that is not often found in the fur trade. In some other rare cases, a fur may start out the season with a very high price and experience constant declines during the season. If a trapper keeps abreast of this, he is able to curtail his trapping activity.

Canadian trapping has an effect in controlling market because when they trap in volume, they are able to produce considerable amounts of all species which are found in Canada which are also found in Alaska. When they are able to produce these in big volumes, this has an effect on the world market. They are able to produce more than the market is able to consume.