

H97-66-24

Charlie Wolf

Fairbanks, Alaska

Charlie Wolf was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1900. He joined the army and was in the United State Army band. After the army he worked around as a telegrapher. He returned to the army to be in the band again and went to Hawaii. He came up to Alaska after he retired from the army. He had tried to get a job in Alaska but didn't have any luck. He first came to Elmendorf and worked for one year in the Air Force band. He stayed for three years and returned to the states. After twenty-six years in the army he was able to choose his station. He returned to Ladd and put in the rest of his thirty years.

After he got out of the army he went up to a trap line on the Colleen River. He was there for ten years and enjoyed it. He used to leave for the Colleen River about the middle of August and return in June. He also liked to canoe and last summer he was gone for ninety days. His wife insisted that he stay in Fairbanks for the winter this year.

His canoe is a thirteen foot canoe. He describes what he carries in his canoe. He uses a miner's or herder's tent with mosquito netting. He always carries birch bark to start fires. He lists other equipment and food that he takes with him. He likes how the Hudson Bay Company rents canoes for one-way trips. One of the trips he took was down the Mackenzie River. He traveled 2,000 river miles and had just a few portages. He traveled down the Fort Nelson and Liard Rivers. When he travels in Canadian Rivers he reports to the local Royal Canadian Police Force for safety reasons. He talked about Virginia Falls on the South Nahanni River.

Charlie talks about wolf behavior. One of the game managers told him about how wolves chase moose. They gradually wear out the moose.

He talked about other canoeists that he ran into on the South Nahanni River. He talked about the canoe sashes that some of the people wore. He describes going over seventeen miles of rapids with a drop on the Mackenzie River. It is called the Beaver Dam by the local people. He describes Fort Simpson. The Mackenzie River is a clear water river until it runs into the Liard River. Traveling on the Mackenzie in June and July can be very hot. There is quite a bit of barge activity on the river. A hazard of the McKenzie is the north wind. At Norman Wells a life was lost when someone tried to cross the rapids. Usually with rapids there is one passage through the rapids. Some rapids can't be run. Just above Fort Good Hope are the upper rapids of the Mackenzie which extend for seven miles. It is a limestone formation. Father Rabin said the Indians could tell he was a white man because he was paddling up the river in a canoe. He describes the Cree Indian written characters. At Point Separation he headed for the mouth of the Peel River. He paddled on the Rat River. He describes the Porcupine River. The Colleen River (also called the Sucker River) is a swift shallow mountain stream. He bought his trapline from Ed Owens. Ed had a trading post at one time. Joe Ward was another person on the Porcupine.

Side B

Charlie Wolf reads some of Wickersham's writings. Joe Ward lived up above Schuman House. He lived there for forty years before retiring to Fort Yukon. He was a successful trapper.

Charlie discusses the different canoeists in Fairbanks. The Canadian maps plot the portages, rapids and falls. The Alaskan maps have some of this information. The first white man who went across North America was Alexander Mackenzie. He said the fur trade built Canada. All the travel in early Canada was by either canoe or dog team. He thought that most old sourdoughs didn't know what was around the next corner. They poled up the rivers and floated down the rivers without motors to help.

He points out his route on the Mackenzie River on a map. He thought Ft. Yukon boats were about forty feet long and they moved them over portages with ropes. He talked about the different boats that serviced sections of the Mackenzie River. They discuss Eliza Steamboat from Old Crow.