RECORDED INTERVIEW

OF

GARETH WRIGHT

CONDUCTED BY

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INTERVIEW OF GARETH WRIGHT

(Beginning of Part 1 of 1, beginning of recorded interview.)

ROGER MCPHERSON: How did you first get into dog mushing?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, when I was a little boy I -- that was -- everybody in the old days, my dad had them, that's how we got around was just by a dog team, that was the means of transportation.

And I was living at Nenana, Alaska, at that time, and my dad always had dogs. And then in those days, they used to have some big races in Ruby and Nome, and they were just starting the races in the early days there in Fairbanks here, the Livengood race and the Signal Corps races, and they would send out these posters to sell tickets on the dog races, to finance them.

And that's -- everybody just -- that's all they talked about was who had the best dog team and who was going to win the race. And I don't know, ever since I was a little kid, I just -- that was my big ambition. And when I finally was 13 years old, I got my first dog

of my very own.

And I was lucky in the fact that I got one of the original Johnny Allen breed of dogs that comes from down in Ruby. And they -- that was one of the top greatest dog mushers of all time, and still is, as far as I'm concerned, in not only the breeding of dogs, but also in the manner that he handled his dogs.

He didn't -- he wasn't a harsh whip driver or anything of this nature, he was a man that demanded his dogs to mind and to do their job, but he wasn't constantly after them trying to be harsh about whipping them or hitting them.

And I've heard stories about him from the early day dog mushers that said that he could stand in one spot and make a figure eight with his dog team. Now, this is what I'm still trying to do.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Johnny Allen is from Ruby, you say?

GARETH WRIGHT: Yes.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Was he -- did he have a lot of -- did he do a lot of dog mushing in the Ruby area, then?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, yes. He -- he mushed and raced in the Ruby area, but he's not well known up here. He -- I think he won, it was in the '37, '38 and '39,

won the first man to set the -- as fast the records, broke the 15 mile an hour record for 30 miles. And he had, at that time, a crossbreed that I understand was part wolf and part husky and part Irish setter. And so this is what I've been trying to do is reduplicate his breed of dogs.

And he was -- he isn't in the country anymore, but any dog musher that knows anything knows -- has heard about him.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Tell me how you got your first dog, then, when you were 13. Did you know Johnny well enough that he gave you the dog?

GARETH WRIGHT: No. I got my first dog from Jimmy Bruce, he was from Minto, and it just happened that the breed had gotten down to -- see, in the old days they didn't fly dogs to Fairbanks, or anywhere. The dog originally came from the -- out of the Johnny Allen breed, from Ruby, and it was through Harry Riley (phonetic), and he still lives in Minto and has still a good team.

And how the dogs got there was in the old days, we didn't fly them in like we do today, or drive around with trucks; they drove them, actually drove the dog team all the way right along the rivers, and that was the means of transportation.

And so what happened is this dog that -- where I got the ancestor of my dogs, the dog happened to be going to have some pups, and he didn't know it at the time, and it was getting too slow, so he left it there with Harry Riley. And so Harry Riley gave him another dog in place of it to use it, and so that's how the breed got out.

And in later years, that whole team of Johnny Allen's got drowned. He was going across the river and there was an overflow, and it opened up, oh, just across the snow, and the whole team went under and they lost every one of the dogs. So there's very few of that breed left, and a lot of people that do have it now, it's -- they don't even know they have the breed, the few people that is left, you know.

ROGER MCPHERSON: You're still running the same breed in your team now?

GARETH WRIGHT: Yeah. It's -- the breed now can be told pretty well by the -- if you look on the tongue of a dog, it has a black spot. And just about every dog on my team has those black spots on their tongue. And I don't know, it's people -- we try to figure out where that came from. A lot of people say it comes from the wolf, but I can't say for sure where those spots come from. A lot of people say wolves don't

even have black spots, but some people do say that.

ROGER MCPHERSON: When you got your first team together, how many dogs did you begin running at 13 and what were you doing with the dogs?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, when I was 13, I just had the one dog; and then the next year, well, I got three more brothers out of the same mother. And then I had a four dog team, then I was really in business.

Then I -- well, I used them to trap when I was -- after school, I'd go out every night, and I'd run about an 8, 10-mile trapline; then on Sunday, I'd go out an extra 5 or 10 miles, and go out all day Saturday and all day Sunday.

And in those days, we used to get 60, $70 for fox, and mink was the same. Muskrats was running somewhere around 3 and $4. So a lot of times I was making more money than my dad was working for the railroad at the time. And so this way, I got out of shoveling coal and a lot of other hard work that I didn't like, you know.

And -- but I think that it's, you know, a wonderful thing for any young boys to get started, it shows them responsibility. And then also compassion and love for other things and other animals, and also other people.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Did you train your first dog team yourself?

GARETH WRIGHT: Yes, I did. I raised it from the time that one leader, and it was the best leader I've ever had in my life, and I just had it with me all the time. And that dog, at the end, would go gee or haw, you could be running right down the road and it would just jump right off in the trees if you said gee.

When I came to Fairbanks to go to high school, I drove the dogs from Fairbanks -- or Nenana to Fairbanks, and then that was my transportation, those four dogs. We lived about three miles out of town, and I drove them to school, tied them up at the schoolhouse, and then drove back after school and drive them -- in them days we didn't have many cars in Fairbanks, but the few that we had, I was passing them going gee and haw around and in between them. So, I mean, it's a -- that was our means of transportation, period, in those days.

ROGER MCPHERSON: When you were out trapping with the dogs, did you have to train them any special way so that you could trap and have the dog team?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, it's basically the same as we have now, except you'd spend more time with the dogs in those days. I'd have them trained, like when you're trapping, you couldn't be tying a dog up and --

or tying your team down and then walking. Like, I'd walk a thousand feet and set maybe 8 or 10 traps, and then I trained the dogs so if I tell them to stay, they'd just lay there. Then after I got up a thousand feet or 2,000 feet setting the traps, then I'd call them and then they'd just come up there to me. And so I had them trained so that they'd stay or they would come at my command, you know.

And this is about the way the most of the early day people had their dogs for trapping because they spent the time, they lived right with them, and the dogs understood them and they understood the dogs.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Now, how did you have the dogs learn the command to stay?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, you just -- it's just like training anything, it's just repetition. Like I would take and -- take the dogs and tell them to stay, and if they -- and just go over and over again, and then if they don't, you know, you reprimand them by hitting them with a switch or whatever. And keep saying -- and keep doing this over and over until finally the dog learns, just like you train, well, any animal or any person, it's just repetition, over and over. And some dogs are more intelligent than others and easier to train, and if they don't learn, it's just like people,

you know, you get rid of them.

ROGER MCPHERSON: So you have to determine whether a dog is smart enough at times and can understand what you're saying, too?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, this is true. Some of them it just comes natural. I mean, it's -- the dogs are -- it's bred into them pretty much. It's been generations, so in hundreds of years, the dogs have been bred just for pulling and working in the cold. So it comes pretty natural, just like we've got our retrieving dogs for hunting.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Gareth, could you tell me about the number of dogs you have right now.

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, I've got grown dogs right now, about 13, which is one of the lowest number that I've ever had, but they are the best bunch of dogs I've ever had. A lot of times people have a big yard full of dogs and they've only got 6 or 7 that are what you'd call real top dogs. But I have about 20 pups out here that I'm raising, hoping to build the team up eventually to 20, to 25 dogs, is what I'd like to have.

And what most people keep that are racing, they keep anywhere from 15 to 40 dogs, depending on what they can afford, and this, that, and the other.

But the pups are -- is a pretty tough thing.

You never know until the dog is two years old whether it's going to really do the job or not. And the dog doesn't really get in his peak until he's about three and a half to four years old.

So a lot of times you raise dogs and train them and spend a lot of time, and it's a big disappointment because the dog can't run -- instead of running 17 miles an hour, maybe he can only run 16 miles an hour, and you don't really know this until the dog has grown up.

About the best way, though, is to get dogs that have the genes through the breeding and the background so that at least you've got -- you know that you're working with something that's been proven in the past.

I think this is a mistake that a lot of people do, they think, well, a dog is a dog, and it just isn't so. I mean, it's the same of anything, that's just like if you've got a cow, just because it's a cow don't mean it's going to give 5 gallons of milk a day. Some give 5 and some give only 1.

So it's the same thing with chickens with laying eggs, and same thing with dogs if they are good workers and have got the speed. And of course, if you're going to work on a freight team, that's a different type of a dog than if you're going to go for the racing dog.

But -- so this is a -- one of the main things a person's got to look to is what -- what he really wants to do and what he's looking for and what breed he starts with to work with.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Have you always been careful about the kind of dogs you breed?

GARETH WRIGHT: Yes. This is one of the most important things. A lot of people think that if they get a good breed and then they don't pay attention to who the mother -- the father is, and they end up having a good breed, and inside of a generation or two, they lose the entire genes of that breed.

And the thing is that if you don't actually really be strict about it, I mean, when a female starts to come into heat, you've got to have a separate pen or a place so that you know exactly through visual knowledge that the animal has been bred with that male of your choice that you've chose to breed with the animal.

And this is one of the biggest problems that's happened in a lot of the villages is the fact that they haven't taken the -- the initiative of just saying, well, this has got to be, and taking it seriously. And it's not only in the village, but in the town here. In Anchorage, Fairbanks, anywhere of people that have got a

good breed, inside of four or five years they have nothing and then they wonder why.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Can you take a good dog, one that really shows characteristics of pulling and running and the kind of things that you want in a sled dog, could you say that kind of dog would be a good breeder or would that be an incorrect thing to say?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, no. Naturally, it's better to take a dog, the best of anything usually creates something better eventually, but in breeding, it's a real tough thing. A lot of times you take two of the best and you just get nothing. But you can take those offspring, maybe, and they -- that are not showing anything can produce a super dog. But, I mean, it's -- this is one thing that nobody knows until you actually have tried.

Like if there's a -- usually the genes are held usually in the female. And if you get a female that throws good pups, you better hang on to that female because there's -- the female usually is going to throw six to eight pups, and you can get a team in pretty good -- two or three years, you know, if you breed it to the same male that's producing.

And to find a good male, though, is really hard, compared to a female. There might be one good

male in 500, you know, that will produce, whereas you might have one out of every 50 females that might produce, you see.

And so this is the thing that most people, they don't realize that they might have a dog that's produced good pups, and then it isn't running good, so they think, well, we'll kill that dog or get rid of it, and really, in essence, they are selling -- just like selling the goose that lays the golden egg because those pups might be super dogs, but they might take them -- them and their pups for five years from now to ever find another one that will equal the mother of those.

So this is the thing. If you have a dog that's going to produce good pups that are proven, and then you'd better hang on to that male or the female, especially the female, because it's carrying the strong genes of producing the speed and the endurance.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Let's say that we have a couple of pups that have just been born that are from a potential good mother and father. What kind of -- what kind of care do you take with these puppies to make sure that they grow up strong and healthy?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, you've got -- once they are getting weaned, you should start feeding them at least two to three times a day. And then most -- in

this day and age, most all the young dogs are born with worms, so you should always worm the pups the first -- as they first starting getting weaned.

And they have this liquid wormer made by Purina that's a real good one and just add to the feed. And they have directions on the bottom, it's not very expensive, and it's a real good wormer for young pups.

And the main thing is to give them plenty to eat and while they are first getting weaned off, you know. And plenty of water as they are growing up. And then as time goes by, well, then, you can cut down to twice a day and then to once a day.

ROGER MCPHERSON: What are the kinds of shots should young dogs get?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, if there's -- you've got to have distemper shots. And if there -- if it's been a year where there's been distemper around or going around, you should get a puppy shot, but the dog is usually immune from six weeks to two months old from the milk from the mother.

But after that, if there is distemper in the area, they should have a puppy shot, which will hold them over until they are 14 weeks old, and then you can give them a permanent distemper shot. But a lot of people -- you don't want to confuse the puppy shot with

a permanent distemper shot because a permanent distemper shot even given when the pup's only, say, 12 weeks old -- or 12 weeks old, it won't be permanent. They have to be a minimum of 14 weeks old and -- to give the permanent shot that will last. And then that lasts more or less indefinitely. These are distemper and hepatitis and some other thing, I don't recall.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Tell me, then, about the food you give the dogs also to keep them strong. Do you have a special diet?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, yeah. What we do is feed -- well, I feed -- now, I'm a -- Purina dog food, and I feed the high energy dog food, the -- that they have, but this is not sufficient in the wintertime because of your -- if you're racing dogs, you have to add extra protein, through which I add usually through fish, and then I add -- you've got to add some fat for the dogs when it's extremely cold.

And they have a pretty well-balanced feed, and most of your commercial feeds are -- at this time got the proper vitamins and stuff, but they don't have it for under extreme stress. So you have to add fish, if you add salmon or whitefish, or you could even add, you know, dried or whatever.

And like right now, I'm feeding whale blubber

for my fat. And it's working real well because it -- it's -- I use a lot less than I would if I used the beef fat or something of this nature.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Do you cook up the blubber first?

GARETH WRIGHT: No, I just feed it to them raw, cut it and -- just like muktuk.

ROGER MCPHERSON: It's pretty chewy.

GARETH WRIGHT: Not for them.

ROGER MCPHERSON: After then -- I think we've talked about feeding, but the other important area is training. When do you start working with a dog, a puppy?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, there's a lot of different theories on this, but my theory, and I have seen it being proven out now in the latest research of all the top dog handlers and trainers of all types of dogs, there are new ideas that the sooner you take a young pup and start individually training it, the more chance you have of -- of having that dog become its own, whereas if you leave a group together, there will be one or two that are very dominant, and even though there might be one that actually has more ability, he'll tend to -- and it's weaker, the other one is going to scare it, and so this one will dominate everything. So the

sooner you take them and take those dominant ones out and tie them up and work with them separately, the better off you are.

I know in the -- they've had some tests on German shepherds where they figured that out of a litter of six, they were lucky to get one that was an exceptional seeing-eye dog, and now they've taken those pups at six weeks old and separated them and they are getting as high as 90 percent of those pups as top seeing-eye dogs, whereas they were lucky to get one before.

And the psychological effect that they have on them, it sounds funny to talk about dogs having psychology like humans, but it's the truth. And, I mean, certain ones are aggressive and certain other ones are timid. And so a lot of those timid ones would end up being aggressive and might be your top lead dog if you gave it the time and spent the time with it at an earlier age.

But as far as actually training, I take my pups and I start training them at about two months old to follow me. And I walk out and, oh, maybe the first time just a thousand feet, and just play with them and bring them back.

And as they get older, then I take and run them

on my Snow-Go and I have them chase me. And I'll go as high -- even with a dog 8 months old, I'll go as high as 15, 16 miles. And I had 19 pups follow at one time, and they just follow just me and that's all. I mean, I can go through dog kennels, through horses, around moose, anything, and those dogs will just follow that one machine.

And this, I feel, is very important because I'm able to determine which are the fastest, which are the most aggressive and trying to keep up, and if a dog is going to quit when he's a pup, he's going to quit when he's grown up. And so I feel this is a good way of training and eliminating waiting for that three or four-year period. And so this is one of the methods.

Then, by the time they are about 8 to 9 months old, then you start putting them in harness. And a lot of times one that will run good might not take to the harness right away. So if he doesn't take to it, I mean, you might have to spend a little extra time, but usually the ones that like to run are going to like to run in the team.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Do you usually put young pups with a team that's already experienced, or do you start with a pup without any experienced dogs?

GARETH WRIGHT: Oh, no, you're always better

off to have -- you should have at least good lead dogs and swing dogs. Then if you -- you're better off to run an old dog and a young dog, and then on back. If you have four pups, say run one with an old dog, they'll teach them to mind. And if you get a whole team of pups together, they'll just about chew your towline up before you get started out of the yard.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Well, how many -- how many dogs in the team do you have when you're starting to train pups?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, usually you should have a smaller team, and you don't want to start out going fast. You can ruin a good dog if -- by putting one or two pups in a fast team because they'll get going and they'll lose their balance and start getting choked, and then they are afraid from then on.

So your best bet is to take, say, maybe, if you have a good lead dog and a couple of good swing dogs, then put in about three pups at a time, take maybe a five or seven dog team. And then if the dog lays down, we'll go up and pet it and talk to it and reassure it, you know, that it's not going to get killed on its first trip out. And then as time goes by, they will pick up and just start working. And then you can increase the number. But it's better to keep a smaller team because

if you have a dogfight or any trouble, then you're able to stop it and handle the team.

And you shouldn't put a big team together until you have all experienced dogs and that they know what they're doing and what you're doing.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Tell me how you -- when -- your daily routine of practice with the dogs, tell me about how you bring the dogs up to their peak so they can run in the longer races.

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, the main thing is you've got to start as early as possible in the fall; and if possible, in the summer, it doesn't hurt to run them once a week. And some people say twice a week just for a mile or two miles. But I've never had time to do that, so I start usually in October and November, and then I'll start running them 7, 8 miles, and I'll just run them that way for about a month.

But as they increase, then I put weights on them to make them work. And really, if you've got a proven dog, you don't have to run it no 20, 30, 40 miles to get it in shape to run for a 30-mile race.

Last year I came in second, and I had 19-month old pups, and I -- the furthest I ran them was 9 and a half miles. But that 9 and a half miles was working constantly on pulling. Like, if they -- what they could

have run empty, they -- probably took them half again as long because they were -- they were still expending the energy.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Gareth, what kind of a training trail do you have here?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, I've got actually a rather rough one. It goes -- I have to cross a major highway, and then I go through rather brushy country up to next to the Tanana River, and it's -- I -- I don't keep a real smooth trail.

There's a different concept there. A lot of people feel in training race dogs that you should have a completely smooth, even trail. And the -- now, this is debatable and it's up to each individual, but like myself, I believe in training on a rougher trail, and then I feel that if the -- when you get on the smoother race trail that you're going to be that much more advantage than if you're -- if you do happen to hit a rough trail in some race, which most races now, they don't have too rough a trails, but at least I feel that if you start with the worst, you can always get -- it always gets better.

But right now I run a trail that's approximately 7 miles, and then I have -- it jumps up to 10, 12, and I can go up to 15, and even up to 26 miles

if I wanted to. But basically, all I use now is just the 7 and the 12-mile training trail.

And I -- I've just built it with a Snow-Go, but I always make it wider and make it three Snow-Go's wide so this way I can train for passing teams without having them fall off in a snowbank.

And I think this is a real important part of training is having your trail so that when you catch a team, your dogs aren't going to be having to get out in deep snow because especially young dogs, you tend to ruin them if they don't continue past, you know, without getting bitten or something like this. And this gives room for you to -- to pass. And then your most race trails are anywhere from 6 to 10 feet wide. But this trail is -- I just let it -- whatever the Snow-Go, and I drag the tire usually to smooth it out.

And another important thing in training is that a lot of times people got their dogs in shape but their dogs' feet fall out. And what causes this a lot of times is the cold weather training, there will be this ice, frost that will fall out of the air, and it just doesn't look like anything, but it's just like a dust on the hard trail, and then this tends to get in their toes and next to their toenails, and in essence, it's actually freezing them. And then a lot of times you

won't even know it until after you've run four or five times or a week and it finally comes that they have actually been frostbitten, and then the dogs get sore feet and then you wonder why they are not running.

And so this is something that you've got to really watch. And a lot of times you should clear your trail previous to running if this condition exists. And we use a -- I usually pull -- run two, couple three teams a day, so I pull a tire, and this tends to brush that snow off. And then you run your slower dogs first and then your better dogs after. And that's about that.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Tell me what kinds of equipment you have when you -- when you -- first the training equipment, the kind of equipment you use when you're out on the trail around here; and then secondly, the kind of equipment you use for races.

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, yeah, when you're training, you want to have a heavier sled. And you -- I usually use the steel runners because they are harder pulling, and then, of course, they never wear out. And when it's cold, steel pulls real hard, and so this gives a -- more power for the dogs to pull on.

And then the harnesses we use are just called the Siwash harness, which is -- it goes over the head and under the arms, and it's used most generally by

everybody. It's -- it was originally -- originated around Huslia.

And the towlines, we run two dogs together. Of course, everybody knows that. We don't run like in Canada where they are single file to single trees or anything.

And then, of course, there's the Eskimo style, fan hitch, but I mean, in dog racing here, those -- neither one of those are useful because the fan hitch, you'd be running into trees, and all your dogs are -- you'd be in one heck of a mess. And the single hitch, you'd be around the track before you got back, I think, especially hooking up 16 or 18 dogs.

And the trails are quite crooked a lot of times, too, so you've got to have your team as close as you can, but you don't make your towlines too short because this tends to pull the dogs down. And you've got to have the length of about 8 to -- anywhere from 7 to 10 feet, depending on the size of the dogs between each section. And this keeps the dog from, if it's too short it will tend to pull his -- his hind end down and then cripple him, see.

And the same thing on your neck lines, you've got to have them not too short so that it's constantly choking him, but you don't want them too long either so

that he's getting his leg over to trip on them.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Who makes up your dog lines and your harnesses?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, I make my own dog lines up. And right now, there's a Jim Pinkerton that builds dog harnesses, and he does a real good job, puts the batting on them and everything out of nylon. Most of the people have been getting them from him up here lately. But up until he came around here a couple years ago, well, we all more or less made our own.

ROGER MCPHERSON: What kind of -- what kind of material are the dog lines made out of?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, we usually use this polyethylene, and use 3/16ths inch for the neck lines and tug lines, and then 3/8ths inch for the main towline, except if you have a long stream in the two front, the lead dog and the two swing dogs you'll use maybe quarter inch because they don't need that heavy of a line. And then if you do have a big line, big team like that, you might make the back four dogs out of half-inch line.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Tell me more about the sled, the kind of sled that you use when you're training dogs and when you're racing. Is it a long sled with several stanchions on it for training?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, no, usually for training, we have about maybe -- you can -- it varies, you know, but usually we'll have about a 5 or 6 foot -- 4 to 6 foot basket, and that way we can haul weight in it if we want to, and carry extra gear or whatever.

And then for racing, you usually have about a 3 and a half or 4-foot basket, but your training sled usually has the shorter runners in back; and your racing sled, the runner's just about equal the length of the basket. It's just about like a pair of skis for your racing sled.

Then most people use this ski -- what the heck's the name of that, P-tax (phonetic), yeah, and put that on there, and that's about the fastest surface for most every weather. It used to be we'd use different ski waxes, and then metal for -- if it was warmer, but the P-tax is just about as all-weather as you can get and still be as fast a surface.

And then your ski -- your sleds, there's all different kinds that people use. There's birch sleds, like I have birch sleds that were made in Nenana now. And if a man gets good, straight birch and seasoned right, it's as good of a wood as -- as hickory or anything else, it's a lot lighter and just as strong.

But a lot of times the people, they don't build

the straight grain, and then they'll say the birch sled is not good, but I would say it's as strong if not as better of a sled that there is if you have it properly aged and straight grain.

ROGER MCPHERSON: How would you age that birch to make it the right -- well, first, would you start with the green birch and bend the green birch, or would you age it first and then bend it?

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, they usually -- you can do it either way. But the thing is that if you get the -- usually -- they'll usually take and get the green birch and bend the runners, and then let the other stuff dry, you know, and build the stanchions and stuff. But they'll usually bend the green -- the runners when it's still green because it's easier to bend, and then let it dry right on the form.

But it takes a season, a good full season to age the birch enough to have it good. But a lot of people build it, cut it down and dry it for a month in the house, and then expect the thing to stay straight, whereas your hickory is your most -- the hickory and the ash they build out of, but they are a heavier sled, and it's so hard to get it, the material.

But they have this Moody sled, Longboard (phonetic) and a lot of these people have been using, a

guy by the name of Moody builds them out there in New England, and they cost about $250 a sled.

ROGER MCPHERSON: Gareth, will you give me your opinion about dog mushing today.

GARETH WRIGHT: Well, actually, I think dog mushing today and in the future is only going to -- is the only way to go. I mean, the people have gone through the Snow-Go deal, and really, what fun can you have out there with a bunch of smoke in your face and a bunch of noise.

I think the day has come now where people are starting to realize that you've got to get back to nature. And what better way is there than through the dogs.

And the feeling of responsibility that you have, and the -- and the feeling of achievement that you have by working with them.

Why dogs are so intriguing to many people is the fact that it isn't like a horse. A horse is just one animal, and once you've got it trained or something, it's -- you don't have the feeling of -- of achievement that you might have with dogs because each one is an individual, and when you get them working as a team, then you have this sense of real down inner feeling of achievement of not only yourself, but of a group of

other living things.

And I think that this is one of the best things that younger people and kids especially can get into because it teaches them that they have another living thing that they have got to feed and is looking to them, sort of like a lot of people look to God or whatever they look to, that these animals are dependent completely and entirely upon this person that is feeding them, watering them, and driving them and training them.

And for going out into the woods, whether you're trapping or just sightseeing, or just getting in the fresh air, the dogs are the -- the only thing. They are -- they are natural to the country, they belong to the country. And the sense of feeling that you'll get, you can't feel unless you try it. And once you get this feeling, you'll -- you'll be stuck. And it's wonderful.

And it teaches the children the responsibility that they are going to have to face in later life. And so I feel that the sooner that any kid, whether he has one dog or two dogs or three dogs or a whole team, the sooner they get into it and the more interest they take in it, I think the parents should be more than happy to help them with what little it costs because out in the villages, they can fish.

And this is another thing, it teaches them to

put up and -- like they can dry their fish, and when they are trapping for beaver and muskrat and other animals, they'll utilize this as dog food. And it gives a great sense of -- of wellbeing to the person to know that he is self-sufficient in doing something for himself and his family and for these animals that are -- are dependent upon him.

So I think that there's -- wouldn't be -- like you take a snow machine, I mean, when it stops or runs out of gas, and you're pouring gas, you get smelly mittens, and the darn spark plug quits and the thing breaks, and, I mean, you can't have this feeling of in the nature-ness as you can with dogs.

And so I feel that it's one of the most worthwhile sports as far as dog mushing and racing, but also just as an individual means of transportation and enjoyment.

(End of Part 1 of 1, end of recorded interview.)