

Call Number: 02-00-30

Joe Ward Interview, X/X/1970

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Notes: Original on 7 inch reels. Master copy on CD.

Joe Ward begins with discussing food nonchalantly. Joe says you get duck and put them in the drum and "let them go all night" and everything is cooked. Joe says throwing onions in there heightens the taste. Joe begins reading from his journal. He says "then we left Eagle" [unclear who "we" is at this point, but later it becomes clear that "we" is Joe, George, Franks, and Chips]. Joe and company were just starting out prospecting. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September they shot ducks, September 10<sup>th</sup> they left Circle. Circle is 260 miles from Dawson. They got stuck twice on the sandbar. That was easy to do because they had never been on a river before. He took photos with a camera. Joe and company got lost in the slough. On Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup> they floated 377 miles to Fort Yukon. They didn't stay long, just a day. At 10 am the next day they started up the Porcupine River. They started poling and Joe said they didn't know how to pole which leads to hearty laughter from the female interviewer. He said two would be on the bow and the other would be poling, they were working against one another. They had an inch line that would sag right in the river. Fred got a "wetting" [fell in the water?] and took two photos. The travel and crossing was difficult. They didn't know how to use the oars. On September the 14<sup>th</sup> nothing special happened according to Joe's journal. When traveling on the river Joe and company would just find a bar and sleep on the bar. On September 15<sup>th</sup> there was difficulty with crossing. On September 16<sup>th</sup> they were bear hunting and Joe says he never shot a gun in his life. They didn't get anything. Joe says there was rough weather and on the 17<sup>th</sup> there was ice on the sides of the River. They got lucky. They got up to Bootleg Bend, 16 miles up from "here" [?]. There were two white trappers named Anthony and "Dippy" Walker. Anthony and Dippy saw Joe on the bar and Joe and company camped with them that night. Anthony and Dippy came over next morning and showed Joe and company how to set the line. The trappers said Joe and the guys could stay at the Shuman House if there was nobody there. Anthony and Dippy were going up to the mountains to find a creek and prospect. Joe and company got to Schumann house and they had moved in the night before. That was good luck again. Two of Joe and company stayed with the boat and the other two went along the bank to a nice batch of timber. Joe says "You know what we have Charlie" [The interviewer is possibly named Charlie].

Joe and company started to build a cabin up "there." Anthony and Walker gave Joe and company fish and rigged Anthony and Walker rigged Joe's boat so it would go a long better. Joe and company went hunting ducks and stayed all night in Anthony's cabin. Joe put up a mast and the boat broke. The rope and mast broke. Joe and company arrived at Schumann house only to find that a couple of Indians had got there ahead of them. This was on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September. Joe shot a snipe [bird]. Joe and company started to build a cabin on September 21<sup>st</sup> and finished and lived in it on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. There were four of them and they put a flat roof on. It was the first night under a roof since they left Dawson. It snowed 6

inches that night and slush ran in. There was ice floating down the river. They cut a trail on September 27<sup>th</sup>. They had about 20 traps and they figured they're supposed to be smoked. That just scared the animal away. An Indian named Joe Herbert visited them and he invited them to go hunting. They started out on a moose hunt. They eventually had dinner at Joe Herbert's house. When they were hunting the lakes were frozen. It was getting dark and Joe Herbert stopped and said "moose." They looked out about 100 yards and a great big bull stood there. Joe and Joe Herbert started shooting. Old Fred was excited and never did shoot. Joe the Joe Herbert hit the moose three time and knocked it down. They packed the moose up and went home. Old Fred put meat in a sack. October 1<sup>st</sup> they were making a toboggan to bring half of the moose meat. They had a carpenter with boards and chips. The carpenter made a toboggan and old Fred and Joe put their beds on the toboggan and couldn't pull the sled with their beds on it, never mind half a moose. Joe and company left the toboggan there. They asked Joe to help them fetch the moose. They would pay Joe five dollars for bringing in the moose. Joe and company broke part of the moose on the toboggan. Somebody would climb a tree and Joe and company would go from one trail to another.

Joe discusses their first attempt at making bread is recorded. Joe discusses the sourdough making business. Joe and company were using sourdough hotcakes and Scotty would have died if they didn't figure out how to make that sourdough because he was in bad shape. Anthony and Walker visited Joe and company. They showed Joe and company how to make bread. That was the first bread they had since leaving Dawson. There was nowhere to get anyplace because of the weather. Joe says he developed and printed photos. October 6<sup>th</sup> he made a flash for the camera and stacked the provisions. The provisions included half a moose, two hares, eight grouse, two ducks, and 20 salmon. That was the supply for winter. October 7<sup>th</sup> they put in the trail and on October 15<sup>th</sup> they built a second trail. It snowed about every day. George, the Scotchman, and Chips, the Swede, and Joe went moose hunting. Fred went down the river thirty miles for the sled. Joe and company split wood to get ready for the winter. Joe put feathers in the cabin because they didn't have a floor. They fixed traps and baked. George and Chips came back from hunting without anything and Fred came back without the toboggan. Anthony came up and he saw a marking track around the cabin. He told them that every once in a while you go to the trap and make "deadfalls." So that's what Joe and his crew did. They also set rabbit traps. They got four grouse and caught two rabbits.

At 19:25 the woman asks the man to turn the teapot down because it was going to boil out of water.

They got a lot of grouse. They had one shotgun. Joe built more deadfalls. They shot 20 grouse.

On October 20<sup>th</sup> Joe says the boys went home. They started setting traps and caught their first marten. When they caught the marten, they didn't know what it was.

At 21:10. October 30<sup>th</sup> they caught more rabbits and shot grouse. George was sick. On November 2<sup>nd</sup> they were setting traps. They got about 9 rabbits and 50 grouse. November 2<sup>nd</sup> was the first day on the trails with snow shoes. They also skinned the martin. They never skinned anything before. They started making more traps. They built number three trail. None of the trails were over two miles long. All of the men went out on a toboggan and they would all go out and cut the trail. They divided provisions,

and for the first time they started two companies. It was Joe and Scotty, and Chips and Fred. They would take turns making turns on the trail. One man would stay in the cabin and the other would go out and make trails. Joe said that they ran out of shotgun shells.

At 23:50 Joe says he wrote down it was George's birthday but does not mention what day. Joe and company went to visit Anthony and Walker people who visited them. It was a 30 mile trip. There were two trails to get to Fort Yukon. One of Joe's friends was going to Fort Yukon and they figured Anthony must have followed the winter trail. Joe and George thought they went too far and came out on the river and they felt they'd seen that part of the river before. They went down the river until it got dark. Joe says that must have been 40 miles. They didn't have anything to eat. They went across the river, climbed the bank, made a fire, and sat there all night. They went back because there was no Anthony and no cabin. They started back next morning. Scotty was a poor traveler. Joe told George to lay down because he saw a cabin and wondered if that was the cabin. They always had a revolver and Joe said if he fired the revolver than Scotty [George] would hear the shot and Joe wouldn't have to go get George. Joe went up and shot the revolver and Scotty [George] never showed. He kept going down to find Scotty and he was sound asleep. They walked up to the cabin and Anthony wasn't there but there was a lot of fresh fish. Joe and George went in and cooked and helped themselves. That night Anthony showed up. Joe and Scotty stayed with Anthony a couple of days.

At 27:30 Joe says on Thanksgiving Day they set snares and traps along the slew. Fred was sick and Chips went down to the Indians at Fort Yukon. Joe went on number three trail. On December 1st Joe came back and he had caught four rabbits. Eric came bringing something from Fort Yukon. It was between 50° and 60° below zero for three weeks. They got a visit from and Alaska Native named King Edward. Chips came back from Fort Yukon. Harry came back home at 12 midnight. Franks Foster came up with George. Harry, Frank, and George went up to Rampart House for Christmas with two dog teams. Chips broke trail for them for a long way. Joe finished ventilating and feathering the house. Joe and Fred stayed around the cabin for Christmas. Joe says Fred was a good singer.

For Christmas dinner Joe and Fred had rabbit, grouse, and moose thing with rice. Joe and Fred had fruit dumplings. Joe says there was a rain and snow storm on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, Joe cooked the same dinner as Christmas. Fred made more fruit dumplings.

At 31:25 Joe discusses how the census taker came by the cabin. The census taker's name was Blue. He stayed with Joe for about 3 days. There was an Alaska Native [Ray] with Blue. Joe and company had set some traps up the river and the Indian told them that "A blind fox wouldn't go in there." Ray brought the traps and set them for Joe and company. Blue insisted on paying for the days he stayed. Blue was the only census taker one who paid to stay. Anthony and Ray left for the Fort. Joe and company caught their first lynx in a wire snare. They caught a mink in a deadfall. Chips and Joe went up and set a line. They caught a lynx. Ray and the census taker Blue left. They also caught a red fox where Ray set the trap.

Chips went out on trail number three. George and Joe went with Harry to High Place. George and Harry set out for Rampart again. In February they got their first letter from the Outside. Chips went down to

see Dick Martin to learn how to set rat traps. Joe had a visit from Alaska Natives. March 1<sup>st</sup> George came back from breaking trail and he brought in a mink.

During spring falls Joe and company caught a lynx. Donald came on the way to Fort Yukon and stayed two days. Ray Walker stayed with Joe and cut cord wood. Joe whip sawed lumber for two thirty foot boats. They cut 15 cords of wood and started up the river. Joe and company went up as far as Canyon Village where they cut 11 cords. On the 24<sup>th</sup> they went up to Cybil's [?] cabin. On the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> they cut 12 more cords of wood.

Between the first and the fourth they cut four cords of wood. Joe says he wrote that they were going up to Cybil's cabin on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Joe says they went up to Sucker River Portage where Canyon Village is now and started to cut wood. Cut 10.5 cords then started for home. Joe says they got to Cybil's cabin on the way down then went home. Scotty was Joe's partner and was supposed to be catching rats [muskrats]. Joe had 80 dollars coming in from going 90 miles up the river and cutting 75 cords of wood. Scotty was sick but Joe still split the money with him.

They started trapping rats in the slough. Scotty and Joe went out to the cabin they built and Fred and Chips trapped rats around home. They went one month eating rats three times a day, frying them in their own grease. They saw some swans and shot at them. They went duck hunting and Joe got lost. Joe was looking for new lakes and thought he would find some new lakes. Joe had a shotgun and one shell. Joe must have passed the cabin because he was on the hill. Joe climbed a tree and was completely lost. Joe was lost because he was up the hills and the cabin was in the flats. Joe saw lakes from up top and he went down and found that the lake was where they had been trapping so he knew his way home.

At 42:45 Joe begins talking about how he could have been lost 50 miles from any place. Climbing the tree helped. In the evening he fell in the lake. He was ready to go back to the camp then and drift down the river.

The man asks Joe to explain who Anthony and Walker were.

Joe says they went up 60 miles to trap and also to fish. It was September when they were trapping up the bar and they went to see what Joe and company were doing. Anthony and Walker were old timers. He doesn't know how long they were there but Joe says Walker was an American but Anthony was either English or Canadian. Anthony was married to an Alaska Native girl. Anthony would stay at the Rampart Hose a lot of times. Anthony was popular around the mission. Last Joe heard of Anthony was he went over to Mackenzie and he opened up a store with somebody. Joe says Anthony was a very well educated man. Frank Foster was an Englishman. He worked for McEnroy [?] and built another house where Walker and Anthony were and then Bootleg Ben. Frank Foster never got his papers so he paid a hundred dollars for his license. Frank foster used to build boats.

At 47:10 the interviewer asks Joe how they entertained themselves when they went to go visit Anthony and Walker. Both Anthony and Walker helped Joe and company get a long because Joe and company wanted to know a lot.

Joe says Walker was called "Dippy" because he used to drink a little. One time they rolled him onto a wooden bunk and Dippy woke up and thought he had been buried. The interviewer is attempting to clarify that Joe was trapping on the Porcupine River and wants to know who was trapping on the Sheenjek River. Joe says only Rue Mason. Walker and Joe went to visit Rue and he wasn't there. Rue trapped 300 miles up the Sheenjek River. Rue's boat was called the "Billionaire Baby." Rue had a dog called Mickey. He was a big 200 lb. dog. One time Mickey was chasing a moose. Four dogs were the most anybody did have. Dad Rice and Smith trapped in that area. Smith was a Swede, a fine young man. He was trapping 40-50 miles above Joe and he used to go to Black River beaver hunting. He left 2-3,000 rats at Black Crow. Smith always had a lot of money. Dad Rice and Smith disappeared. Joe believes that Dad Rice and Smith shot at one another because neither of them returned to their places. Haley and Strong used the rats left by Smith to sell at Fort Yukon and that's how they got their store started.

Joe says that when Smith was at his place the only remarkable thing was that he was eating prunes and he'd eat the stone and everything. Smith buried some money under the bank near his house and the bank collapsed and it took him four days to recover the money.

Haley and Strom were trapping but they knew about as much as Joe and company knew their first year. They had a little boat when they got Smith's rats. Haley and Strom had two trading posts. They went broke. Joe says they could have made a lot of money because there was no competition but they still went broke. Haley came down to Rampart House and that's the last they heard of him. Joe says Haley and Strom traded up there for one or two years but Joe's not sure.

There was a man coming a long way. Joe's place was in a bend but the man stopped at Shuman House. The man came along buying rats at \$3 a piece but they were only selling 3 for one dollar. Joe didn't see him but the man went up to Old Crow and had taken Charlie Strom's place at the Rampart House. Dave was there one winter; he paid three dollars for them and got about a dollar for them. Smith went up to Old Crow and Oscar Shots [?] was trading there at the time. Oscar wanted to buy the rats for \$3 apiece and Oscar and Rue Mason went to town and they stopped at Joe's. They didn't tell Joe about the price. They went to town and got Smith's mail. The rats had dropped down to a dollar a piece. Oscar shows if he hadn't had sold them he would have went broke too. Oscar would have went broke if he would have given Smith the mail. [Confusing story]