

Fairbanks and Portland

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Charley Mayse, 70, trapped the winter of 1973-74. This recollection of his trapping was done reluctantly as is evident. Charley is a modest fellow who doesn't think anything he does is unusual. Trapping for a winter is not unusual, but for a man who just turned 70 it is, I think. The reason for the tape was to get some insight into trapping for the ignorant (like your interviewer Mike Dalton). The quality of the tape in the beginning is poor because of Charley's reluctance to talk about himself. But he finally forgets about the recorder and loosens up a bit. With interviewer is Charley's friend Jerome Lardy. We had just finished a meal that featured (a Dalton gourmet delight!) moose meat loaf, scalloped potatoes, cole slaw, freshly baked rolls and chocolate pie. If I had been thinking I would have realized that Charley had had his fill of moose this winter, but the meat loaf was 2/3 moose and 1/3 pork sausage mix (with appropriate seasonings) so it wasn't too bad. The two gulped down the home cooked meal with relish so I am sure they enjoyed it. Back to Charley.

Asked Charley if his experiences on Birch Creek a couple years ago (when he got iced in and lost for several weeks) had ever been recorded. He said he was interviewed by radio station when he got out, but nothing too long. Perhaps he would consent to an interview some time in the future.

This winter Charley was trapping out of his main cabin on Beaver Creek which is located between Fairbanks and Ft. Yukon. He has one main cabin and four line cabins. He's been in that trapping location since 1949.

Charley came to Fairbanks in the fall of 1943. He was at Northway during construction of the runway and facilities there. He stayed there until the fall of 1946 and then went to Ladd Field where he worked for many years. He bought the trapping line from Dick Morris. Of the 25 years that he has owned the line, he has spent about three fourths of the winters there trapping. Some years have been hard for furs (prices too low) so he didn't trap.

Lardy observes that traps differ in size. Charley says they range from No. 1 through No. 5. Also there is a No. 0. No. 5 trap is for bears; No. 4 for wolves; No. 3 for fox and lynx; No. 2 for smaller animals...Charley says jaw spread on No. 2 same as on a No. 1 1/2.

Fur population this winter not good.

Charley went out Nov. 8th, 1973. Chartered a plane to take him out. Took with him: food, snowshoes, guns, ammunition, matches, clothes, beans, rice, macarroni, cheese, potatoes, carrots, etc. The traps were already there.

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He stayed at cabin from Nov. 8 until March 1. See anybody all winter? Steve Cooper, U.S. Attorney in Fairbanks, stopped in a couple times (in his ski-equipped plane). That's all.

Charley describes cabin: typical trappers cabin. Only this one has four windows instead of two usual ones. Wood barrel stove with flat top. Coleman gas light. Charley's wife is from Portland. Lived there all her life and won't leave. He married her only in recent years.

This season Charley went after lynx and fox, but it was a poor year for both. Catch: four lynx, couple fox, two mink (usually gets 25-30), four muskrat, few weasel, few squirrels...poor season. Started trapping for beaver but didn't go at it too energetically.

Describes beaver trapping: uses poplar twigs for bait. Chopped hole in ice near beaver house and inserted long pole which had snare (with poplar bait) into hole. Waited about three days before going back because the chopping and other noises frightened the beavers away for awhile. Beaver that got snared would drown quickly and trapper would pull the animal up through hole (after he chopped out new ice that had formed).

Once this winter Charley fell into his beaver hole. Went above waist in cold water. Pulled himself out. Had extra warm mits and put them on. He was $3/4$ mile from the cabin. Had on a couple pair long underwear, couple pair of pants, moccasins. Froze one big toe and part of heel. Managed to get back to the cabin and start fire up again. Cabin still little warm from morning fire, but not very warm for soaked Charley.

Caught only six beaver this year. Could have trapped more but he wasn't up to all the hard work.