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Otto Geist Interview, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1952, No Location, Andrea J. Bobner is the interviewer

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The College Women's Club Incorporated presents Telefacts. Andrea J. Bobner [sp] is the interviewer. Geist is asked what paleontology is and he says paleontology is the study of fossil animal remains. Geist had been collecting fossil remains since 1936. The collection was started in 1929 when the Fairbanks Exploration Company uncovered great masses of fossil materials in the lower Goldstream workings. The university had no one available to collect the materials. Dr. Charles Bunnell was very interested in the work. The American Museum of Natural History in New York was contacted and Dr. Charles Frick, one of the paleontologists at the museum, considered the work important enough to send someone to Alaska. Mr. Peter Kiten was sent to Alaska for two years. He was an experienced fossil hunter. In 1929, Mr. Kiten collected by himself. Kiten claimed to be in the work of re-shelving, collecting and cataloguing the specimens. Other people had to take care of the work when Kiten left and in 1936 Geist returned from St. Lawrence Island for good and was put in charge of the collection. The University of Alaska and the Frick Laboratory of the American Museum in New York are the sponsors of the collection. Expeditions are done every year and sponsored by Dr. Frick, but since last year the University of Alaska added a modest amount for the work. The remains collected during the summer are brought to the University workshop where they are processed and packaged to the Frick laboratory in New York. They are collected in New York because they have a large amount of comparative material. University of Alaska doesn't have comparable items. The majority of the finds are made in the Interior of Alaska where permafrost is prevalent. Some large species are found such as mastodon and woolly mammoth, super bison, musk oxen, horse, giant elk, moose, caribou. Not all were native to Alaska. Some have migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait. Mammoths in Alaska had long hair and the camels still have long hair and wool tells us we have similar weather to that we had a long time ago. Many animals lived between 25-50,000 thousand years ago in the late Pliocene Era. The most notable find is the bone of the giant ground sloth, an animal only supposed to be found in tropical conditions. Also surprising is the horse, musk oxen, and super bison. The best specimens are found in the permafrost because they are well preserved. Permafrost is permanently frozen ground. What killed most the animals? Not all died out, some are still present. Those that did die out died probably because of more than one catastrophic cause such as volcanoes which covered the grasses with ash and contaminated the water. Water being dammed might have also killed them. It is possible if the animal was buried in ice that the flesh could still be eaten. In Northeastern Siberia along the Anadyr River and eastern Canada, there are also similar fossils found. A tusk of a mammoth in Dr. Geist's lab was 13 feet and 6 inches long on the left side and 13 feet and two inches on the right side, the largest tusks found in Alaska at that time. The skulls were

also found in the Dome Creek and were brought in by Charles Bunnell and the specimens will be put on display at the Museum.