

**Call number: 02-00-133-17 PT. 2**

**Karen and Roger McPherson are interviewing Clement Esmailka and Henry Williams about trapping.**

**Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen**

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**Series: ATS-1 Educational Satellite Project Tapes**

**Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson. THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.**

The recording begins with a man [Clement Esmailka, as indicated in the tape case] talking about working on housing but having trapped during the previous years. He didn't trap this fall. Previously, he trapped about 5 miles away and got 16 marten. Karen [McPherson] asks what he did with the martens and he tells that he sold them. Karen asks if he trapped as a young man, and he says he did. Then Karen wants to know what kinds of animals he got, and Clement tells that he trapped otters, wolverine, mink, fox, marten, and beaver. It took a long time to catch those beavers.

Karen asks him to describe how to trap beaver. He tells that snares are the best. He sets the snares on both sides of the feed piles [?]. They swim around the feed pile all the time. One can just trap too, by tying [the trap?] on a stick. He ties bait on a spring, on a wall trap. When the beaver gets ahold of that thing [the bait?], he gets caught. They are curious. Sometimes they walk around the bait but don't go for it.

2:29 Karen asks what's the most beaver he's ever trapped in a year. Clement tells that one winter, some 15 years ago, he caught 40. There were lots of beaver houses where he was then. He was over at Lonesome River, about 70 miles south of Kaltag. Karen asks if he used to stay out all winter when he went trapping. Clement says that the longest he stayed out was a month and a half.

Karen asks which one is better for catching beaver, snares or traps. Clement finds snares to be the best, because they are less work and one doesn't have to carry those heavy traps. He used no. 4 traps for beaver.

He says that it didn't take long to set the snares. [He probably is showing the snares.] Karen says the snares are heavy and describes the snare: It's got a lock on it so when the beaver gets there, it gets snared. Then she asks if the man ever made snares for beavers himself. He tells that he did once, but he lost a beaver in it. He caught the beaver in it but the loop came off and it got away. He made the snare out of what's called lynx snare. It's bigger than "that" [pointing to his beaver snares?].

5:20 Karen asks how he sets the snare and if he has to chop a hole around the feeding place. The man tells he cuts a square foot hole. Sometimes he makes it two feet wide and 6 inches long [the man shows with his hands and Karen gives the numbers].

Karen asks what the best kind of bait is. Clement tells that they use cottonwood. That's the best. Sometimes, in lakes, it doesn't matter what one uses for a bait, because the beavers just go for it. In creeks, one's feed pile never gets sour but in lakes they do with all the standing water. When the beavers see a fresh bait they go to it right away.

They also catch some otters around the beaver houses and beaver snares. When they see a hole there, they dive up and get caught [?].

Karen asks if it happens very often. Clement says that if there are otters around, one catches them. Otters always come around beaver houses in order to kill the young ones. Sometimes beavers kill otters too. Once beaver bites, they make a big hole. Once Clement saw an otter run onto a beach and die there. The man didn't take the otter because it was too badly cut. There were two big beavers coming after it. Clement thinks the otter had killed the little ones because there were no little ones there, only big ones. The otter was going to kill the big ones too but they killed it first. That otter that climbed to the beach, curled up and died.

8:38 Karen asks if Clement used to go beaver trapping with his father, but he says he didn't. They never used to trap beaver when he first started trapping. He used to

trap mink with his father but after he got big enough his father told him to go alone. He had shown him how to set traps and so Clement set mink traps, but he did it wrong and his father got mad and showed him how to do it right. After that, the speaker knew how to set traps. A year after that, his father told him to go trap alone.

Karen asks if he used dogs when he went trapping. He says he did. Minto moved the camp. When one goes out to the traps, one has to walk. [Break in the recording.]

10:17 Roger [McPherson] asks someone to tell him their name. The man introduces himself as Henry Williams [Mary Williams is with them too]. Roger asks when Henry drove dogs and if he used them for different things. He tells that he used them 3 years ago just for hauling meat and wood. Roger asks if he also went on trap-lines with dogs and he says he did, a long time ago. They made company for him even when he went alone. They are just like his partners. They play around and bark and when something like a wolf comes around, they bark. He once had 18 wolves come near. It's dangerous in the dark.

One time he lost his dogs too. They broke a line and ran away from where he had them anchored. He had gone see his trap a little ways away and the dogs just jerked the line and broke it. Henry didn't have anything to fight the wolves with except for his snow hook so he ran for 2-3 miles after his dogs. He caught them at his camp. He got mad at his dogs and really whipped them up. The place was 3 hours from "here." They were good dogs.

Roger wants to know how many dogs he had, and he tells that he had sometimes 6, 9, or 10. Today he has 8 dogs. He's got 2 good leaders, but he doesn't drive them much. Nobody drives them or trains them. When one first goes out with an untrained dog, they might think the dog is no good, but the dogs might be if they got trained. If they were fed well and if they went trapping, they could be good dogs. Good feeding is important.

13:25 Roger asks what Henry feeds to his dogs. He says he feeds them "anything": fish, dry fish, dog meal, and anything like that. He feeds them 3 times a day about a fistful of food. He feeds them more in the evening.

Talking about training dogs to stop and wait for the trapper: Henry says they only wait for him if he puts an anchor on. Anyway, they are good friends. They are friendly, just like trapping partners are. Sometimes he spanks the dogs, though, but not often. When they do something wrong, they have to be spanked so that they would understand what went wrong.

Roger asks if many people have dogs from his old team. He says he doesn't know. Duncan bought them from town for \$50 dollars. Henry thinks that "that dog" is worth more than \$200-300 dollars because the dog is a good leader and a strong dog. He drives 5 dogs when he goes hunting and that dog is the only one who is pulling hard. It's working really hard. Roger asks how he named the dog Nightwind. Henry says that his boys named it.

15:41 Roger asks if Henry thinks he will use a dog team again. He says he says he would have to, if there was no gas. He has a sled to a snowmachine. [Someone is banging something in the background.] He makes sleds too, but is too lazy. He uses birch in making them and lets it season for [unclear, 14?] days. He has made lots of sleds in his lifetime and that's why he's tired of making them. [A baby is cooing and crying in the background.] Every year he made a sled [unclear talking]. One has to think ahead so that they can use the sled for another year. One of the boys broke a sled with a snow go.

Roger asks how long the sled is in the front of his house. Henry tells that it's about 12-foot, and one is 9 or 10 feet. He has birch runners and he doesn't put wax or anything on them.

17:47 Roger asks if he goes trapping right now, and Henry tells that it's hard to break a trail. One can go with snowshoes. His trapline now is about 20 miles. One of his boys goes out with him for only one night. They have had tents out there for a month now [?].

Roger asks what kinds of animals they have caught and Henry tells he has only got marten. They are in good health right now. Roger says that Henry's wife is skinning a marten right now. She does all the skinning, but sometimes Henry has to do it if his wife has too much to do. Right now he doesn't have time and when he comes back [from the trap-line], he's too tired to do anything. His wife goes out

to the trap-line sometimes too. When she went the last time, it was cold, over -50 below. They went up the hill where it's warmer. It's colder "down here."

Besides marten, he's caught lynx and weasels. He's only got one lynx and 62 others, 25 marten, and [7 unclear].

More talking about trapping: He's going to go beaver trapping and has looked up the beaver houses where he's going to trap. He went with an airplane last summer. Roger asks if he had the chance to fly around and check the beaver houses, but now Henry says he went with a snow-go. He knows where the beaver houses are because he saw them last summer.

20:34 Roger asks what time he'll start trapping beaver. Henry says it's right now, in February. They stayed out for one month, him and his wife, and the kids were small. Gordon was a baby when they went out with 5 dogs and they had no snow-go. Now they never go out, although they have a "fish snow-go," 8 dogs out there. [Laughter.] At that time, they had only 5 dogs and two sleds. Henry had to pull the sled and every time he stopped, the dogs stopped too. He was strong then. Now he couldn't pull even one.

Karen asks how far he went beaver trapping. He tells he went out about 30-40 miles. He'll set a tent there in the spring. Roger asks when beaver trapping ends. He tells it ends in the middle of April. He uses snares that are made with beaver snare no. 2 wire. They are about 5-foot long.

Karen asks what he's going to use the beaver for. Henry tells that they just sell it to the store in Seattle. [Henry says something unclear.] Roger thanks him for the interview. [Break in the recording.]

22:38 A man starts telling that once he went over a hill with little trees. He went alongside of his traps, way back, and got [unclear]. All of his dogs started barking and they were scared because [unclear]. Roger asks how he hooks up his dogs while he's trapping and breaking trail on front. The interviewee says he singles them out "like this" [he is probably showing something]. Roger clarifies that they are in a single file. The interviewee says he sometimes doubles them up if there is a wide trail, but they sometimes push each other off the trail.

Once he tried to lick and hit the [unclear]. They push but can't push. He really liked dogs when he was younger.

Roger asks if he ever made any long trips with dogs when he was younger and he says he did. He just went trapping, some 30-40 miles out. Right now there's a lot of fur around, but it's too cold to go trapping. Right now, it would be hard to break trail.

At 25:05 Roger asks Henry to tell about the Sleeping Bag Race. Henry tells there was a whole bunch of them, 9 [mushers]. They were lying down and they had their harnesses and sleds ready but the dogs were not hooked. After the count down for starting, they hook the dogs up and put their sleeping bag in the sled. After the dogs are hooked up, stuff is put in the sled. Steven Brookman won.

After they got their stuff ready and dogs hooked up, they had a race. It was just men. Henry tells it was funny for him and he started laughing at what was called the Sleeping Bag Race. When they started counting, the men were lying down in their sleds, and then they would get up and go. Some of them had a hard time with putting harness on their dogs. [Break in the recording.]

27:10 A woman's voice says that they thaw it [unclear what] out and skin it the next day. Karen asks if it has to be kept wet after skinning. The lady tells that they have to keep it from drying out before they stretch it. She tells that sometimes they leave it outdoors for a couple of days so it freezes and then they bring it in and stretch it with nails. It has two pieces. It's put inside out on the stretcher bar. After it's dried like that, it's turned around.

Karen says she noticed that one of the furs is stuffed inside of itself to get wet, and asks if the fur is left like that for a long time. The lady says they only leave it overnight. Then they put it on stretcher. Karen asks how long it has to stay on stretcher bar and the lady says it takes one night.

Thicker fur takes longer. Karen asks what they do when the skins are dry. She tells the skins are turned around, fur up, and they tan the skins they are going to use themselves. They soak them with water and [unclear] unclear and they shave the fur off. Then they have to scrape the skins. Then they are just soft. Karen asks if people tanned things differently before there was [unclear] soap, and the lady says

that she thinks so. Since they have tanned their own skins, she's always used the [brand name, unclear] soap.

[End of the recording.]