

Transcript Summary

UAF Oral History Call No: 2024-01-01 PT. 1

Date of Recording: 02/09/1981

Length of Recording: 1:34:53

Narrator: Gerald McBeath, Wayne Thomas

Interviewer: N/A

Others Present: N/A

Recording Location: Presumed to be University of Alaska Fairbanks Campus

Transcriber: Micki Sievers

Transcription Date: (2/7/2024 MS) (2/11/2024 MS)

(00:00:10)

Gerald McBeath begins by saying that the goal is to encourage education, he mentions that the boarding schools tried to do that but they didn't try to keep people with their culture. He mentions it is important and they want to try to create a system where culture is maintained and mentions a business engaged in the manufacturing of Tlingit items. He mentions the importance of elders passing on knowledge like how to make sleds for mushing and kayaks.

(00:03:10)

Gerald begins to explain that the Puritans believed Indigenous people were not knowledgeable because they didn't have a writing system. However, the process of knowledge was engrained and taught to you instead of written down. He provides examples from different groups in Alaska. He mentions writing was not necessary and the knowledge was essential.

(00:04:45)

Gerald begins by mentioning the modern revolution in how children are educated, even in his area it is a transplanted system brought from the outside. He continues to explain the pressures of the Western world such as guilt, religious oppression, and government mandates.

(00:06:50)

Colonization impacted children's minds and the colonizer who was heavily motivated by the beliefs of religion consequently led to a disintegration of spirit and identity. He mentions some are perfectly content with becoming Americans, which is up to them.

(00:08:06)

A student asks him about Reagan's bilingual decision but Gerald mentions he doesn't know much about this policy. Reagan wants to eliminate federal support for Bilingual education. Gerald says if that group doesn't want to survive, should they even survive, if there is no will to survive to maintain spirit, identity, and language, does it deserve to survive. Gerald continues to expand on it's that group's decision to make but shouldn't have to deal with the outside world. He provides many examples but concludes if you wish to accept the American way you would need to accept the American education system which is built on communal control.

(00:11:40)

Gerald jokes that if this system works then he'd see how many people were still in class by the end of the semester. He mentions statistics from the district on how many high school students are in college and states he believes it shows things are not working. Gerald advises that having a goal is the most important part of success based on the individual and the survival of their people.

(00:14:45)

Gerald mentions spending time with his sister near Kotzebue and there are no pressures on life outside of survival but at least you don't cope with a lot of unknowns. However, survival that way isn't possible anymore except on a minimal level and you must make the best of the situation. The best thing is to become self-sufficient but because the systems had been destroyed because of the destruction of wildlife, people had to be able to adapt and plan for the future. People needed to prepare for scarce times, but this planning and process he has not seen passed down in Alaska.

(00:18:05)

Gerald begins to discuss how corporations focus on profit and in Prudhoe Bay they are taking the maximum capacity of oil out and the state is doing nothing. He asks do we have much control, are ideas like moving the capital, and more are just extreme responses. Oil is only a hope, no one knows if there's more, but they are producing so much and planning to look for more. They increase the debt ceiling, and they control the price of oil.

(00:20:19)

(Gerald has an unrelated conversation with the class about due dates)

(00:21:25)

(Believed to be a recording of political speech or presentation, discusses Asian relations after WWII, does not seem related to the rest of the recording or topics about Alaska.)

(00:45:30)

(Political speech ends)

(00:48:10)

(Complete silence till here)

(00:50:17)

Wayne Thomas associate professor of socioeconomics assigned to the agriculture experiment station. Thomas discusses the Delta Barley Project and a bill planning to cover 60,000 acres to be a part of the project to be cleared for agriculture.

(00:54:25)

Thomas says he will discuss three areas 1. The current market for rapeseed and barley in the Orient, 2. Investment possibilities in agricultural projects in Alaska. 3. Development issues, government involvement, and foreign investment.

(00:55:14)

Japanese commercial agricultural market, massive producer and buyer. Government controls the purchase of barley, trading firms have portions of the barley market, plans are to buy Alaskan barley and sell it to the Japanese market. Rapeseed does not have the same restrictions since direct consumption does not occur.

(00:58:32)

South Korea is the second biggest importer of Barley in East Asia, and they produce significant amounts of barley, unlike Japan. Weather conditions impact Korea's barley needs, and barley is not used for animal feed. Alaska produces high-protein barley which gives an advantage for marketing to another country like South Korea.

(01:01:32)

Taiwan is the third country mentioned, a major importer of feed grains. Taiwan is a very good friend of the U.S. and has long-term contracts with the U.S. to purchase barley. Australia, Canada, and the U.S. are major exporters of feed.

(01:04:00)

Thomas reiterates that Japan is the major focus for the agricultural market as they have a high need and are a growing economy. Explains that Japan has a strong seafood economy but needs to prepare backup food sources. Taiwan is eager for good relations. South Korea is more focused on Alaskan fisheries and less dependent on barley from Alaska. The plan is to directly ship barley from Alaska instead of using multiple connecting cities.

(01:08:00)

Thomas discusses investment possibilities. State investment, Delta Project has an 8-million-dollar investment to clear land and can save money doing a massive clearing compared to farmers individually contracting clearing work. Thomas then discusses the use of farmer loans, payback methods, private-sector funding, and foreign investment.

(01:19:48)

Thomas discusses if red meat production increases and that red meat is primarily produced and imported from the rest of the U.S. Grain was prioritized for Alaska because it is a less complex crop that doesn't require an immense workforce.

(01:24:05)

Thomas mentions the Alaska Grain and Oil Seed Export Market and discusses the possibility of a marketing board that would facilitate sales of agricultural products in Alaska, where the government would be the buyer and seller of the crops. Test marketing program being tested at the time and selling to Asia. Thomas goes on to detail the positives and negatives of the project and government involvement.

(01:29:25)

(Thomas concludes the speech, another speaker is announced and begins talking but the recording runs out of time)

[end of recording]