

## Beaver Trapping

Radio show Dec. 26, 2005

Colorado and other western states have always had an unusual relationship with the beaver. If you were a game warden in the 1940s and 50s chances were good that you were also a beaver trapper.

Beaver were of course what brought the first Europeans to the west. Quite a few mountain men made a good living from trapping. Over the years however, the beaver has gone from a protected species that was actually stocked to an overabundant animal that was considered a pest. Quite a few Colorado game wardens got their start in the state trapping service, still others trapped as a matter of course.

One such man is Don Gore. He spent the majority of his career as a game warden in North Park, an area that typically could be overrun with beaver. Gore retired in 1981 but over his career he trapped more than 14-thousand beaver. Now 87, Gore enjoyed the challenge of trapping beaver so much that he continued to do it until he was 80.

He still has many of his traps and other equipment he used for so many years. One of the most important items is of course a good skinning knife to separate the beaver from his pelt, but you have to keep such a blade real sharp.

Gore... "You've got to have a rough one [blade] and a smooth one. You spent most of your time sharpening them, though, on a beaver's tail. That'd sharpen them better than anything..."

A prime beaver pelt in the 1940s could bring as much as thirty dollars. And a full beaver coat at the time could fetch as much as 15-hundred dollars. Gore and others like him didn't only trap beaver...fox, muskrat, martin, coyotes and even bear were also common quarry.