

**TRAPPING PROVIDED FOUNDATION FOR SATISFYING LIFE IN  
FORESTRY  
03/14/00**

It's been well over 30 years since I set a trap for furbearers. There was a time before that when much of my life centered around trapping.

Many of the reasons for this I was not acutely aware of until long after I quit the pursuit. I am reminded of them every spring when winter eases its relentless grip, the streams open, and the snow settles. It is just such a day as I write about this.

My Uncle Mart introduced me to the sport at an early age and, yes, it is a "sport" to me and to many others. Every spring he trapped a few muskrats for the reasons I am about to enumerate. I tagged along eager to indulge the hunter instincts present in most young males.

Admiration and respect for this worthy role model was the final impetus. It was the early 30s and fur prices and demand were high. It provided much-needed revenue and helped supply a thriving industry as well.

I learned the fundamentals from him and long before I started high school I was buying my own clothes and fishing tackle from trapping income. My first sets were in ditches adjacent to the railroad tracks near my home. By the time I reached high school, my craft was perfected and my horizons expanded. I well remember my first \$100 day. It was in the 40s when \$50 was generally well accepted as a fair weekly wage.

The challenge of outwitting your quarry was the initial motivation as I tackled each new species of furbearers. I still recall my elation when I caught my first beaver. The incentive shifted somewhat, or at least equalized, when I sold the pelt. It was a 65-inch or blanket beaver.

Beaver are stretched and dried in a round shape. The measurement from the nose to the tail and across from the opposite two sides are added together to determine grade. It fell within the top grade and I was paid \$1 an inch. In 1946, incidentally, it proved to be the most I was ever paid, to the best of my memory, for a single skin.

Later in my life my trapping endeavors garnered as much as a quarter of our yearly income. I have come to realize at this stage in life I gained far more than monetary aid. The early lessons I learned have stood me in good stead throughout the rest of life's travails.

Trapping is a hard, exhausting and grueling business carried out under any and all weather conditions. If you are not in good shape when you start, you will be when you finish. It

is a constant challenge to outwit and successfully take the various species of furbearers. One has to know all that is possible about the quarry and its habits. Here in the vastness of the Adirondacks, one must be an accomplished woodsman.

It would be impossible to have had the experiences and satisfaction I have derived from any other craft. Many of the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue my career in forestry were perfected long before my formal training.

I was able to spend untold hours reveling in the solitude and beauty of the backwoods, free of the encumbrances of modern day strife. I covered mile after mile of wilderness, never tiring of discovering new vistas or terrain. If it were not for the beaver and otter beckoning me ever forward, I would have missed a great deal of what I saw and learned.

There are a great many other consequences of a favorable nature I have not mentioned in this column. One is the many fine people I have been privileged to know and call friend. Last, but not least, are the fond memories I have accumulated over these many years. They all come flooding back every spring when the conditions are right and the mind wanders.