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Rudy Krejčí

Dean Warner, host

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Dean Warner talks about Jan Welzl, a self-styled author and explorer. Rudy Krejčí is studying Welzl. He will go on sabbatical leave to Austria and Czechoslovakia this summer to continue his study of Welzl and to finish translations of his writings. Welzl crossed Siberian Arctic and much of Alaska by foot and boot prior to the turn of the century. Welzl lived for a time at Dawson City where he died in 1949. He knew many of the Klondike stampeders as well as Otto Geist. Welzl wrote in German and Krejčí is translating into modern German and into English.

Warner asked Dr. Krejčí why Welzl is important to Alaska. Krejčí said his work is important to Alaska, the Arctic, Western Europe and his native country Czechoslovakia. Welzl traveled from the Siberian Islands to Alaska, Dawson, Fairbanks, Nome and down to San Francisco. Welzl was a self-styled explorer with not much of an education. He had a controversial personality and was challenged by other Arctic explorers. He became famous mainly through two of his books. They were published in the U.S. in 1932. Before and after that the books were translated into thirteen languages. He was highly regarded in Europe and his native country.

Warner asked Krejčí how he found the lost manuscript. Krejčí said it was coincidence. A few hints were given to him from Dean Keim. Krejčí said he is also from Czechoslovakia and was excited to hear about Welzl who was here at the beginning of the century and well known in the U.S. The manuscript was deciphered by him on the basis of a letter in Otto Geist's archive. Geist had written to Dr. Stefansson and described an interview Geist had with Welzl in Dawson City in 1949. Geist's letter was written in 1958. He deciphered that the manuscript was in existence. At that time it was in Munich.

Warner asked Krejčí about Jan Welzl. Krejčí said Welzl was native of Bohemia which was at that time part of the Austria Hungary monarchy. He was born in 1869. Welzl had a meager education. When Welzl was sixteen he took an apprenticeship and decided to take a trip around the world before he finished his apprenticeship. This was between 1885 and 1890. The manuscript he has recovered deals with this trip around the world.