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Fairbanks gold auction

November 20, 1977

Fairbanks, Alaska

Series: KUAC Looks About

[Bleed-through from the opposite side of the tape]

Jeff Kennedy asked Dale Eckles how much money they were holding in their hands right now. He said approximately 180,000 dollars. There was a 145,000 bid on it today and it was rejected. Jeff Kennedy said they are talking about the 62 ounce gold nugget that was offered for sale during the Fairbanks gold auction. Kennedy said the gold nugget was six inches long, one inch wide and three inches wide. Eckles said to qualify as a nugget it has to be found in an alluvial condition. This is either washed gravel condition or it has to be washed into a streambed. There are larger pieces that can be found in a gold vein but they won't be considered a gold nugget. Eckles said it was extremely rare. Kennedy said Joe Kessler worked as the auctioneer in what may have been the first gold auction for individuals since the law allowed individuals to own gold. Kessler talked about how he got the idea for a gold auction. He came up to Alaska for an auction for the state. He talked with several people in town about an auction. There were many people interested. They had a goal of 10,000 ounces. Last month he went to the Miner's Association meeting and he talked to the group about the sale. They wanted the miners to have their gold into the bank five days before the sale. He said that didn't quite work out. They didn't have a catalog for the people since they were taking gold in twelve hours before the sale. He said prices were good. They wanted to get a higher price for the miners and to get the small investor interested. There were 717 people on the first day of the sale.

Kennedy said Ellen Thomas bought 27 ounces of gold. Thomas said they were going to keep it and maybe make some more necklaces. She will keep the gold in a vault in the bank.

Rod Rossander said he was born in Fairbanks and his dad came to Alaska in 1936. His uncle came in 1911 to the Iditarod area. He was born in 1943. They have all been in the mining business. Kennedy asked what kinds of problems they run into in the mining business. Rossander said mainly it's regulations that are made up in Washington. There are small miners that aren't considered when the regulations are created. Kennedy asked how the auction relates to the individual miner. Rossander said it is an opportunity for the miner to sell his gold and to get a fair price for it. In the past the little buyer has not had an opportunity to buy. With the larger nuggets the miner had to go to a jeweler and he would be payed whatever the jeweler offered. This is a competitive market.

Jeff Kennedy asks if person can become rich mining gold in Alaska today. Ernie Wolff said it depends entirely on the miner's efficiency, his costs and the grade of the ground that he is working. He doesn't think any of them are getting rich. There are a few of them that are still on good ground and kept their costs down. He knows one good miner who has lost a lot of money this year but has been able to average it out. Kennedy asked if the days of instant millionaires are over. Wolff said in gold mining they are. Jeff Kennedy signs off.

Unidentified music. Jeff Kennedy said KUAC Looks about came to you from the University of Alaska. Unidentified person said from the University of Alaska this has been a KUAC production.

[The next section of the tape is very muffled and difficult to understand. One of the people on the tape sounds like Neville Jacobs.]