

Eight Fined—

Illegal Polar Bears

Four years of work for Agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ended this week with an assessed fine of \$15,000 against one of the nation's largest taxidermy firms and eight individuals on charges stemming from illegal polar bear hunting in Alaska.

The inadvertent breaking open of a cardboard box containing polar bear hides triggered the investigation in 1971. The box was labeled as "household goods."

The tracing of this box and a subsequent hunt by undercover U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Agents made it possible to obtain a Grand Jury indictment, charging the parties with conspiracy to transport polar bear hides taken in violation of state laws. Those charged were: Jonas Brothers of Seattle, Inc., the firm's partners, Eugene, Chris, and Albert Klineburger; Alaska Guides Kenneth Holland of Talkeetna, Raymond Foldager of Seward, Ralph Marshall of Anchorage, and Charlene Davis of Anchorage.

Mrs. Davis is the wife of the Jonas' receiving agent in Alaska. Jonas Brothers of Seattle is in no way connected with Jonas Brothers of Denver, which is also represented in Alaska.

According to Special Agent-in-Charge, Ray Tremblay, in Anchorage, during the late 1960's and early 1970's, there were a number of cases where sportsmen, guides, and taxidermists formed rings to conduct illegal hunts.

Enforcement was extremely difficult owing to the lack of any regulations outside the three-mile limit and the vastness of the Arctic ice pack.

The use of aircraft to first locate the bears and drive them to a desirable spot where the hunter could shoot the quarry,

contributed to the soaring number of illegal kills made during this period.

Intricate shipping schemes were also formed by some guides and taxidermists to bypass import laws and get the hides to the lower 48.

As a result of such activities, pressure came to bear upon Congress to include protection for the polar bear in the Marine Mammal Act of 1972. When this legislation was passed, all polar bear hunting became illegal, except for natives as part of their subsistence activities.

It was against this backdrop, a 1972 Federal Grand Jury charged the Seattle firm and the individuals involved with the illegal transfer of polar bear permits, illegally driving the bears with aircraft, and the shipment of five improperly marked hides to the Seattle firm.

The case was settled with a penalty of \$15,000 under a Federal Law which allows the Secretary of the Interior to approve civil penalties for such violations. This civil penalty can be assessed if a person knowingly violates a regulation involving interstate transportation.

The Department of Interior in Washington, D.C., approved the figure which was formalized before U.S. District Court Judge James Fitzgerald this week in Anchorage.