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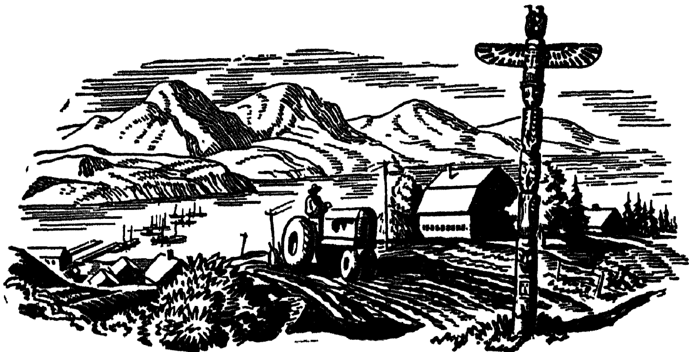
# ALASKA

## *LAND OF TOMORROW*

*by*

Edward A. Herron



Whittlesey House
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# ALASKA
## LAND OF TOMORROW

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# JANUARY

## AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 27.5 | New York | 30.8 |
| Anchorage | 11.2 | St. Paul | 12.3 |
| Fairbanks | *–11.6* | Spokane | 27.2 |

In January the Territory of Alaska is draped in a blanket of snow from the Arctic Slope south to Dixon Entrance. The mercury hovers at the bottom of the thermometer, and even southeastern Alaska battles cold winds and stinging blasts of snow and hard rains.

North from the Alaska Peninsula, the sheet of ice is heavy on the seas, but southward, into Seward and Cordova, into Sitka, Juneau, and Ketchikan, the steamships plow their way through the ice-free waters.

In Seattle the tempo of the Alaska trade does not diminish, for even in January there is food to be sent north, and bedroom sets, baby carriages, and refrigerators. In Seattle the Alaskans who have fled from the northern winter are stirring restlessly. Some are planning trips even further south to California and Florida. Some are chained to desks in the stuffy classrooms of the University of Washington, while others, free as the wind, wander among the delights of Skid Row. Alaskan women with boat and plane schedules stuffed in their purses walk the aisles of Frederick Nelson's department store. But the restlessness is in all of them.

CHAPTER ONE

# The Jumping-off-place

## JANUARY IN SEATTLE

IT IS a paradox to say that men can love a country while fearing it, yet Alaska's greatest hardships hold an actual fascination for people. However hard and cruel the land may be, however discouraging its climate, and lonely its vast distances, there is a magnetic pull from the green-shrouded mountains and the endless stretches of tundra. The land can strike men in the face with sharp blows, yet they will continue to march in the paths that lead north.

This land of ours, these forty-eight states, is a flat space on two pages of an atlas with thin red lines for railroads crossing and crisscrossing in every direction. They start in every corner and cross every state. But if a man hungers for the North, for Alaska, the only railroads he sees on the map are those that lead to Puget Sound and Seattle, for Seattle is the jumping-off-place.

The city on Elliott Bay has always meant much to men who know what lies northward beyond the blue seas and green forests. In January it has the good clean smell of rain-washed streets. There's the rush and hurry of the uptown section around Fourth and Pike, the flutter and swing of the revolving doors in many of the 235 hotels. There are the Alaskan kids starting the winter session out in the university district; the dark night life of Skid Row and the restless hunger of men who wait in the sight and sound of the ships loading for Alaska. There is the constant huff and puff of trains pulling in and out of the neat, square station.

A long time ago the town put up a characteristic fight for the steel rails. It turned out the whole citizenry, thrust picks and shovels into their hands, and threatened to build a railroad line straight back to Chicago. That was in 1874, when the little hamlet on Puget Sound had just been given the death knell by cigar-chewing officials of the Northern Pacific. Those august personages had picked Tacoma as the western terminus of the road, but Seattle started the dirt flying and frightened the Northern Pacific into capitulation.

The city is thrown on seven hills climbing like steps into the sky. But it is the water — of Elliott Bay and the Sound beyond, of Lake Union and Lake Washington — that gives flavor to the city. People come to the city, and they stay for a handful of hours in the hundreds of hotels, but the ships are waiting to bear them away.

Trucks race over the rough streets, locomotives huff, and fat-bellied ships rest contentedly beside pier sheds while stevedores grunt in and out, heaving cargo onto nets, watching with strained necks while the loads lift high into the night air, into yellow-black shadows, then down into the yawning depths of the holds. Seattle — jumping-off-place, mother of the Northland, steep hills, tall buildings, the hushed quiet of the Olympic lobby, beautiful homes on Lake Washington, and always the Sound. Always the Sound and the hoarse whistles and the ships. And always Alaska waiting beyond the down-curving seas.

There is a place on the waters where Puget Sound melts into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the bulk of Canada's Vancouver Island looms ahead. To turn left is to go plunging out into the waters of the North Pacific and to the Gulf of Alaska and Kodiak and the dark, ugly lights of the Aleutian chain—Atka, Adak, Kiska, and Attu. Beyond is space and the smoke of Japan and the whole world of the Orient.

But to turn right is to pierce the Strait of Georgia and

Vancouver on one hand, and northern Washington and British Columbia on the other. To turn right is to enter an island-studded lane called the Inside Passage. Names that delight the memory—Juan de Fuca, Georgia Strait, Queen Charlotte Sound, Hecate Strait, Dixon Entrance, Clarence, Chatham, Lynn Canal—all steppingstones in a narrow, tortuous route opening like a surgeon's knife a route into the heart of the Northland. And all this stems from Seattle, mother of Alaska.

Seattle has known the flood of people northbound for the past fifty years, ever since July 17, 1897, when the steamer *Portland* sailed into Elliott Bay and Seattleites heard the incredible news that she carried a ton and a half of gold sent down from the Klondike. Insanity swept back across the entire country like flames from a gasoline fire. As with one accord every man who had ever dreamed a dream rose from his bed and headed north through the Seattle gateway.

If the town had followed the natural inclination of the day, back in '97, it would have pulled up stakes bodily and joined the chattering hordes of bookkeepers and farmhands, lawyers, undertakers, prostitutes, housewives, dry-goods clerks, and bankers. It would have climbed on the weird collection of boats assembled from every spot on earth, thrown the wheels hard over, and headed north to Skagway and the roaring waters of the Whitehorse Rapids and the glittering land of the Klondike hundreds of miles beyond. It would have gone violently insane in the mad rush over Chilkoot Pass and quietly died in some distant stretch of tundra.

Somebody must have whispered to Seattle the folly of chasing gold strikes. Somebody must have whispered the greater wisdom of selling outfits to miners and sending up shiploads of bread and butter and canned beans, for today Seattle has more than 450,000 people, all of them very kindly disposed toward the Territory of Alaska—which struggles

along with slightly less than 80,000, including all the Indians, all the Eskimos, and all the Aleuts from the unhappy islands. That is a point well worth remembering: Seattle, the vendor of bread and beans for fifty years, has six times the population of the entire Territory of Alaska, which since the beginning of the century has never failed to be the Land of the Great Promise.

Perhaps that is why the state of Washington's congressmen and senators are mostly very benevolent to anything pertaining to the Territory's interests; why they are so willing to pitch in and lend a hand to Alaska's lone delegate in Congress whenever he has something to say in Washington. Thev would be foolish to do otherwise.

Even in normal times, nearly 80 million dollars' worth of goods, a lot of it alcohol, is passed on from Seattle to Alaska, while the latter sends down more than 90 million dollars' worth of assorted products, most of it fish and gold. You mention millions like that and they are just so many figures. You might just as well mention matchsticks. But an automobile-parts store with ten employees doing 200,000 dollars' gross a year is a very brisk little place, and everybody is happy. The Alaska trade sent-up from Seattle alone, just the order taking and preparing the merchandise for shipment, would keep busy the year round a street lined with 250 similar stores. Even if it doesn't all stop in Seattle, that 90 million dollars' worth of goods creates a tremendous number of jobs in the town. Every hand that touches the cargo from the moment the ship swings into the pier until the trains are pulling out of sight takes away pennies, until a good many are resting by Puget Sound. Not that anyone begrudges the money—but it is no wonder that Seattle loves Alaska. And Alaskans have an affection of a sort for the busy city at the end of the line. Hidden deep in the Interior, a man will dream of the day he steps off a ship or a plane in

Seattle. Even in Juneau, which apes the ways of high society, a man will stand down at the wharf and be filled with a wistful longing as he watches a southbound steamer sail.

Sometimes the love Seattle has for Alaska reaches over into the realm of outright possession, and then Alaska rises like a rebellious child to admonish its demanding mother. One of the major air lines wanted to go north through Seattle and Anchorage to the Orient; and Seattle, all eagerness, said "Yes, yes, and throw out those Easterners who want to go through New York, Chicago, and Edmonton into Alaska and then over to the Orient." The scream of rage that came from Alaska, always dreaming of air connections with the Middle West and the East, came as a stunning surprise to Seattle, and she subsided a while to shake her head and cluck her tongue in disapproval. She sent off emissaries to the Northland to find out what caused the rebellion, and they were greeted with caustic comments such as "Seattle has sucked Alaska dry for fifty years—give us a line to the East." There the matter stands, Seattle still smarting from this revolt of the North.

Solid, red-bricked King Street station with its fringe of yellow taxis is the wide mouth of a funnel shooting a stream of newcomers to the waiting hotels. Some of the hotels, like the Olympic, have atmospheres smothered in splendor, but it is in the smaller hotels, like the Gowman and the New Washington, where a man can talk out loud without being hushed by a bellboy, that the Alaskans congregate. Not all the hotels are like either the Olympic or the Gowman. Many a wanderer, counting the dollars after a fruitless battle for a living in the States, will stumble across a dingy place with showers and toilets at the end of the hall, red carpets, and ancient furniture. But if the mattresses are soft and the linen clean, a wayfarer cares little, for he has nothing to do but sleep and wait for the trip north.

There is a sharp bite in the January air, freshly washed by a morning drizzle, and an overcoat is pleasant armor. Only a stone's throw down the steep streets are the waters of Elliott Bay and Puget Sound. In other harbor cities, the respectable districts and hotels hurry away from the waterfront, but here in Seattle the "Golden Crescent," the heart of the city pulsing within, hugs close to the waters, acknowledging the life that comes from the seas, not ashamed of it.

Clusters of ships ride by the long pier sheds, booms swing in and out, figures move in the distance. Trucks bounce along the waterfront street, and a locomotive churns by pulling a string of freight cars. Out in the stream is a small yacht-like ship heading for the dock, the little *Northland,* coming in from the Juneau-Sitka run. A man who loves the water will half turn to walk down the sloping, concrete-covered hillside.

In the pier office of the steamship company, the traveler lays out $46.02 for a first-class ticket to Ketchikan, sailing on the *Baranof* at ten the next morning. He feels as though a load has been lifted from his shoulders, with the realization that now nothing but time stands between him and his departure for the land of legend.

Alaskan Way is the name Seattle pulled from a grab bag for its waterfront back in 1936. In Philadelphia, for instance, a similar street, with a similar endless line of ships thrusting bows against the shore, similar endless miles of pier sheds, similar roaring trucks and churning lines of freight trains, goes under the prosaic name of Delaware Avenue, and the mind is not stirred. But here in Seattle, the very name—Alaskan Way—makes the mind take wings. Every ship becomes a ship impatient for Alaska, every truck becomes a groaning bearer of romantic cargoes, every freight train is filled with goods from the farthest reaches of the Territory,

bound for Los Angeles and Denver and Chicago, heavy with furs and fish and gold.

Wander inside a pier shed and see the cases of canned goods destined for Alaska stacked in high tiers, each tier labeled with a familiar name painted black against the yellow board—Ketchikan, Juneau, Fairbanks, Seward, Skagway, Douglas. Stand by the thick bumper rail and look out over the short stretch of oily water to the rusty hulk of the *Victoria,* tied by huge hawsers to the dark pier. Dirty and disreputable, when glanced at casually, with white steam curling lazily from her stack, the old *Victoria* makes a sorry appearance alongside the trim liners of the Atlantic trade. But to Alaskans, she is the "grand old lady," queen in her own right, despite the seventy-five creaking years that have made her the oldest iron vessel in active service under the American flag.

Once, in the first hot days of her youth, the *Victoria* set a speed record across the Atlantic, and once she carried President Grant on a round-the-world tour, but mostly her memories are of Alaska—of breaking the first ice into Nome each spring and of breasting the Inside Passage and the heaving waters of the Gulf of Alaska. Her dirt is not grime but the honorable scars of an old campaigner.

While she is readying at the pier, her sisters in the fleet are spread over the 1,800 miles to Seward and beyond, ships whose names mean Alaska—the *Aleutian,* the *Baranof,* the *Columbia,* the *Alaska,* and the *Denali.* Up in Dutch Harbor, retired from the fleet, the *Northwestern* swings at permanent anchor, its stern still pitted by an enemy bomb, and under the water of Unimak Pass and Johnstone Bay are the *Mount McKinley* and the latest victim in the long line of sea tragedies, the *Yukon.*

These are the ships the Secretary of the Interior scornfully dismissed as hopelessly outmoded on one of his visits

to Alaska, yet Alaskans have an affection for them. Let a ship be your link between a distant home and the States, bringing mail and food and clothing and liquor with unfailing regularity, and affection is bound to well up. The Alaskans can overlook the shortcomings in rusting iron and tiny staterooms. Then, too, the Secretary was looking not at the ships but at the wealthy absentee owners who rule them. Alaskans look to the ships and let the Government look to the stockholders.

A man can't stand forever looking at a ship and calling up memories, much as he would like to. There are odds and ends to be done, friends to be visited. Up on First Avenue is a cluster of outfitting houses so thick one wonders how they all stay in business. One of them claims to be the very first to have sold a complete Alaska outfit—way back in '97. That was in the roaring, hellcat days when dreamers of dreams tumbled out of every Northern Pacific and Great Northern train, out of every steamer coming from the South to tie up in the Sound. That was in the screaming, booming days, so surprisingly like the second gold rush of 1941-1944 when Government money was shooting back into the Territory like water gushing out of a fire hose.

In the period from 1897 to 1900, just as from 1941 to 1944, men poured in by the thousands and the tens of thousands. In the first gold rush the hotels put extra cots in rooms and corridors, and even livery stables rented out sleeping space. In the second gold rush the extra cots were still being trotted out for a price, but the livery stables had given way to garages, and men awoke with grease on their trousers instead of hay in their hair. In the first rush north, men went up looking for gold; in the second day of dreaming they went with the gold already assured in the form of contracts, with a willing government guaranteeing them $150, $200, or $250 a week. But they were all looking for outfits, some-

thing to wear, something to keep out the wind and the rain and the biting cold. They all wanted to spend money, and Seattle was waiting to show them how to do it.

This question of an Alaskan outfit has several hundred thousand answers—one for every person who has ever ventured north of Dixon Entrance. Mostly a man can make himself look very foolish—and strip his pockets doing it—by loading up with the weirdest assortment of wool and leather ever assembled. The most sensible idea, if you are heading for southeastern Alaska or the Westward country, even in the dead of winter, is to take what you'd need for a trip to Boston or Chicago, just making doubly sure you've got a pair of good rubbers and a raincoat that really keeps out the rain. If you're heading for Fairbanks in the winter, take along, in addition to the Chicago outfit, a suit of heavy underwear. Once on the scene of action, you can always pick up any additions you may need. Even if there is an extra charge, you'll at least be buying only necessities and not be carting along a lot of junk. And the Territory wants your business.

If you do get foolish and start throwing around your money for every startling woolen shirt and every forty-dollar parka the salesman shows you, don't be too ashamed, for you have plenty of partners in your foolishness. Even the Army went off the wrong end and sent the troops into Attu with the best leather boots obtainable. They were most attractive, but they were no good in the wet bogs of the Aleutians, and the consequent suffering from frozen feet was heard around the world. Luckily, the Army has plenty of money. The boots were thrown away and the GI's settled down to ordinary shoes over which they pulled rubber galoshes of the sort we used to see flopping, opened, on every pair of pretty legs in the late twenties. They looked grotesque and very unmilitary, but they kept out the water, and everybody in the Aleutians

from General Buckner down to the colored engineers flopped around in them.

Parkas are admirable windbreakers and nice to wear when having your picture taken, but they are hot indoors and the struggle to climb out of one is nightmarish. If you figure on patrolling a beat out in the tundra for hours on end, then a parka is a mighty good thing to have. If you're just planning to dash from a hotel to a restaurant for a cup of coffee, by the time you have put on and pulled off a parka, you will wind up cursing the garment. Overcoats have proved their worth in all parts of the world, including Alaska.

Friends can make a city come to life. Without them, Seattle in January is a place of dull streets, gray with melting snow, row on row of silent stores, darkened windows, and parades of stony faces. For a tourist waiting to sail, however, there are diversions even in winter. There are sight-seeing trips for a better view of Mount Rainier, excursions to see the bidders at the Seattle Fur Exchange, or to gaze at the frozen fish in the Museum, or to drink in the smell and feel of Alaska in Ye Olde Curiosity Shop and in the Hudson's Bay Fur Company Museum. These are welcome amusements for the tourist or for anyone making his first trip through Seattle, but with the fourth and the eighth and the tenth time through the town, they begin to pall. Then is a man lucky for his friends.

Seattle is studded with Alaskans. It is a popular saying in the Territory that there are more Alaskans in Seattle than in Alaska. Some of them come to spend the winter while their sons and daughters attend the University of Washington. Skid Row is thick with miners from the Interior waiting out the winter. Along Fifth Avenue, outside Frederick & Nelson's department store, a man is bound to chance across a familiar face—the stenographer from the treasurer's office in Juneau,

the construction stiff from Anchorage, a fox farmer from one of the islands. The talk leaps to Alaska—births and deaths, tragedies and comedies, marriages and divorces. Small talk, but all of it rich, all of it against a background completely foreign to the plate-glass windows of Frederick & Nelson's.

In the darkness, harried by a stiff breeze off the Sound, the wanderer hurries along Skid Row, watching the sampling of beer in the various taverns or sitting down to an enormous bowl of oysters and crackers. But by midnight he is back in the hotel, and in the adjoining room there is silence. He tosses and turns, remembering Alaska—Taku winds, picnics by the glacier, and a try at salmon fishing out by Tee Harbor. A man's body goes around those things, and they become a solid core within him. He turns north and starts to dream of cold waters, the slap-slap of a gas boat turning into the inlet, the howling of the wind as it breaks down the Channel. It is insane, and he labels it for insanity, but there comes a time when a man is hungry for snow and fog and the bite of the williwaw as it snaps the surface of the Bering Sea.

A half-mile away a hoarse whistle sends a wave of sound creeping through the darkness, and sleep follows in its path.

At ten o'clock the next morning, the traveler cuts his way through a blanket of fog and walks up the sweating gangplank to the decks of the *Baranof*.

# FEBRUARY

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 30.0 | New York | 30.7 |
| Anchorage | 18.0 | St. Paul | 16.2 |
| Fairbanks | *—1.6* | Spokane | 31.0 |

In February the snow still lies like an impenetrable blanket upon the Territory, and in the Interior minus signs continue to bedevil the thermometer readings. Nome is looking out at an expanse of frozen sea, with only the drone of planes and the thin voice of the radio to link the town with the rest of the world. Ketchikan, far to the south, is smarting under the sting of thin, relentless rains, touched from time to time with the sharp bite of sleet.

Along the Alaska Highway between Whitehorse and Tanana Crossing, the water in cheap whiskey turns to ice, and seventy below makes a mockery of antifreeze solutions. Cold steel sticks to the flesh.

The University of Alaska opens an extension course in Matanuska Valley, lecturing to the winter-bound farmers on income tax and pest control, while in Skagway the members of the Women's Club work on a "Flower Garden" quilt to be handed out in the annual raffle.

Down in Sitka, regardless of wind, snow, sleet, or the passage of time, the Rotary Club sits down to its weekly luncheon.

CHAPTER TWO

# Background For History

## FEBRUARY IN SITKA

THERE are two young girls aboard, both of them wide-eyed at the sight of so much water. One of them is a tall, slim blonde with a trace of the Bavarian in her soft features. The other is a bright, quick-tongued Celt, blue eyed, dark haired, and with an air of self-assurance held before her like a thin armor. Yet underneath the armor anyone can see that her spine is tingling, that this is the Great Adventure. The blonde's feelings are cloaked in a misty, faraway expression.

Only a few weeks before, back home in Helena, they had listened to a nurse from Alaska's Territorial Department of Health, recruiting coworkers for the Pioneers' Home in Sitka. They had listened to the urgent tones of the Alaskan, then had wandered off to the quiet gurglings of the Missouri. For the pretty little Celt, the promises of the unknown Northland had won over the familiar attractions of Montana, and she signed the year's contract. The blonde, because of her close friendship with the other, came along. There was no other reason. The romance in her heart would bubble just as freely in a blizzard as in a dust storm.

They have a stateroom high on the boat deck, and the small curtained window is opened to let in the heatless rays of the sun. The pensive blonde is completing the last of three dozen postcards, while the little Celt rubs her shoulders on the dusty settee, feeling the ship rising to the heavy waters. Underneath is the subdued rumble of the engines. From the guidebook on her lap, she checks off a landmark as

they slide past Magnolia Bluff, then steam past Point No Point, until there is nothing but a long stretch of cold green water. She lifts her eyes and looks out to the snow-shrouded land, hazy in the gray fogs of February. The blonde licks at green penny stamps. Montana is fading in memory, and Alaska is waiting.

The two have become part of a great northward movement, unconsciously stepping into a stream as relentless and far-reaching as the warm currents from Japan and the broad ribbon of the Gulf Stream. And they are only two of the hundreds who jam the narrow staterooms of the *Baranof.*

There are some to whom the tilting decks are home—men with blue uniforms and a bit of braid on their caps, men in dungarees who coil huge hawsers and wash the decks with spitting fire hoses. There are scores walking the bridge, oiling the winches, standing watch in the bow, tending tables in the dining room, burrowing deep within the ship by humming engines. To these the ship is home, and from the ship comes their living. This ship and dozens of others plying the waters out of the Sound and heading north and west.

Traffic to Alaska is waterborne. Planes are making deep inroads on passenger traffic, but all the vast cargoes of freight and most of the passengers still go north by ship. The sea route is a rutted path for thousands who spend their lives churning north, turning south again, resting for three days or a week in Seattle, then setting off again to the cold waters of the Territory—bringing in the food and the mining machinery, the crated dogs, the bunches of bananas, the shining automobiles, the well-dressed people. Perhaps there is another life, but for them life is the ocean highway to Alaska.

One of these men in a blue serge uniform hangs over the

rail, looking toward shore while the ship glides past Vancouver Island. Call him Rudy Hansen, Captain Rudy Hansen, Alaska pilot. Put a few wrinkles around his eyes, shade his hair gray, give him a clear skin, piercing eyes, and a sharp tongue—a sharp, bitter tongue. Perhaps there is no bitterness, only disillusionment, for years upon the face of the sea open a man's eyes and present the picture of things to him in a clearer light.

The waters of the Inside Passage and all of Alaska are as familiar to him as the lines in the palms of one's hands. There are few like him, no more than fifty over the entire stretch of sea from Seattle north to Nome and west to Attu, qualified to lead a mighty ship skillfully through waters that bear the well-earned epithet, "the graveyard of ships." Skilled in the knowledge of hidden things—sucking currents, islands invisible in the fog, sharp ninety-degree turns in a treacherous channel, the menace of Ripple Rock—a good living comes to him from the ship.

Such a man is born to the sea, and the experience crammed within his knowing comes from an endless stretch of months and years of threading these same waters. He spends his boybood on Puget Sound looking out to the gray ships disappearing in the distance, while his own dory is being slapped hard by the giant waves. There comes a day when the Sound can no longer hold him, and he treads the decks of ships that span the world. Promotion comes as a natural thing until he accumulates a half-dozen squares of paper attesting his skill in the things of the sea.

Then he breaks from the hold of the shipowners and buys a hull and installs within it a rumbling engine, mighty for its size but small for the tremendous job ahead. He has the mail contract for the Alaska islands out of Juneau down to Port Alexander. Said that way it appears simple, yet the truth is something to appall a man, and his body becomes a

living reminder of four years' experience bought at a high price.

He gets messed up in a slogan chiseled in granite—"The mail must go through." Every week for fifty-two weeks, for four endless years. He reaches out for the slogan, and in the reaching nearly breaks his heart and his health. But the slogan pounds upon him—not that he really cares—but it is there and behind it is a mail contract heavy with penalties and blind to obstacles.

They chop ice from decks and rigging while crossing the bitter face of a glacier lying in wait to snare fools who dare. They fight gales and fog and snow and hellish weather, unrelentingly—four men in a sixty-five-foot monstrosity whose only excuse for being is the engine within her hull and the squat boxlike cabin to give a minimum of shelter. They push out every Friday from the dock behind the rock dump at Juneau, out into the glacier's mouth—every week for four years.

They keep afloat when waves are so mountainous that they seem to be making sport of the stubby craft, and from the shore watchers radio into Juneau that a ship is foundering. They keep going and push into the fox farms and deserted canneries and herring plants and native villages, carrying the limp sacks of mail and the bulging sacks of freight from the mail-order houses.

Four years of facing death in an unpleasant form each time a mooring line is lifted, and a man becomes bitter. Other boats are running on weekly schedules, but they are huge things, fit to cross oceans. The mail boat is puny, and time relentless. But the boat is the pilot's life. His living comes from the churning screw beneath the overhanging stern. Seven hundred and fifty miles in a week's time becomes 39,000 miles before the year is through, and with the passing of four years, a distance that could circle around the

globe, not once, but five times. And every mile that is battled away is a mile of anxiety, hard seas, and lurking rocks ahead and a pen-chewing, penny-pinching penalty clause ever behind.

But all that is finished, and even the bitterness is softened in the warm realization of a completed contract with never a missed trip. There are others who have taken on the contract, and for men who are able and conscientious and who do not wilt under the first spasm of fear, there will be more contracts to other Alaskan islands. As the tide of people spreads through the tangled waterways and the new canneries come to life, the fox farms multiply, and the towns increase, the mail will follow.

It is good to know such a man as Rudy Hansen, for he views Alaska with a calculating eye, an eye that looks always for a living, not for the fascination of totem poles and bits of carved ivory. If a man is looking for a living from Alaskan waters, let him talk to Captain Hansen.

He says bluntly, "If a man can be happy tending a grocery store down in the States, he'd better stay there. This Alaska is a rough, tough country. When the weather is bad, it's the worst in the world. If a man comes up here not willing to step out and fight bitter loneliness and rotten weather and real hardships, then he's making a mistake leaving his home in the States. If he's willing to accept these things, then this Alaska is as good a place to fight out a living as there is in the world."

Hansen scratches reflectively on the wooden rail as two young fellows walk past, their eyes to the land. Honorable-discharge emblems are visible on the wings of their collars. "These young fellows, they're coming up on every boat. Most of them don't have any idea what they're coming into. A lot of them are going to be disappointed."

The remarkable thing about Hansen, though, is that he

does stay with the country, and that even when his seafaring life leads him into far lands, he invariably returns to the Territory, to the green waters of the Inside Passage and the tumbling seas of the Gulf of Alaska.

It is best to come first to Sitka, for in this town of two thousand, the history of Alaska was written. Sitka drew the Russians down from the North and the Yankee traders up from the South, and men went from Sitka to other parts of the Territory to write new chapters in the history of Alaska.

The town today has much of the Russian touch left upon it. In February the land is covered in a blanket of pure white snow, and the myriad islands in the harbor are white specks on a green blanket. Mount Edgecumbe, with its soft rounded lines, loses its prominence in the vast panorama of snow. The forests of spruce about the town are bowed under heavy white mantles; the trails through the woods are narrow rutted paths; the ferns and the violets, so abundant in the summer, are buried deep. In the summer months there is a long siege of light, misty rain, and the winds blow in from over the bay, but in the winter there is only snow, soft lines, round curves, and the trees bowed down.

Since it is off the beaten track of the regular Inside Passage run, the Alaska Steamship Company by-passes Sitka except in the fish-and-tourist season. During the lonely months there is only one vessel of the Northland Transportation Company calling on an irregular schedule that varies from once every ten days to once every three weeks, depending on the heavy hand of strikes that falls each winter without fail upon the northbound boats.

When the *North Sea* does come in February it brings visitors from Juneau, thirteen hours away. It has on board an Indian mother coming to visit her three sons in the Sheldon Jackson School, a young fellow just discharged from the Navy, who has bought an island out in the Sound with

plans for starting a dairy, two old-timers heading for the Pioneers' Home, and, of course, the two young nurses.

The two thousand people comprising Sitka in the month of February are embroiled in a heated discussion about the probable effects on the halibut of a new experiment—sea-otter trawling from a fishing boat. The city clerk is sending out a notice of the sale of the Russian Greek Catholic Church for delinquent taxes; and a young Indian boy dies of tuberculosis.

Late in the month, the sun comes out with lukewarm fervor, and immediately the enthusiasts talk of spring, eyeing garden tools and purchasing cans of red lead. They look down toward the waterfront, waiting for the stentorian blast of the cold-storage-plant whistle that will announce the first boatload of herring for the season.

Sitka celebrates the death of winter in its own way by gorging on fresh herring. When the whistle sounds in the still air, large crowds swarm down to the waterfront, carrying pails and pans, knowing that this year, as every year, the first boatload will be given away to all comers. They swarm down to the wooden dock, circled by screeching gulls and screaming children, and watch the grinning crewmen, wading up to their hips in herring, toss the slippery load into the barrels and grind them high into the air to plummet onto the dock.

With the herring safely tucked away, the crowds wander down to watch the departure of the *North Sea,* to wave good-bye to the young couple who are going amicably over to Juneau to make the final plea for divorce in the United States District Court, and to shout farewells to the half-dozen or more who are starting vacations that will take them down to Seattle and California, to Florida and New York. Sitka, tied down by the demands of the salmon and the tourists, must take its prolonged vacations in the winter, and the pull of assured sunshine is strong.

A few last letters are thrust into the open maw of the mailbag tied to the foot of the gangplank, three throaty whistles blare from the huge stack of the *North Sea,* and Sitka is left alone to wait the coming of another boat.

The people go back to their homes, to their stores, to their fishing fleet. The two young nurses step into a cab and are whisked away to the $250,000 concrete structure called the Pioneers' Home. There is no need to worry over the fate of the two nurses, for their future is as clear as though stamped on the wings of their white nursing caps.

The young, blue-eyed Celt will marry a soldier within six months and go with him after his discharge to a new home in Wisconsin. The blonde, only a month after the other marries, will become the bride of a local boy and her lot will be thrown in forever with that of Sitka. But for at least six months, the Pioneers' Home will be a happier place for having known the two.

There 175 old-timers, men who first dreamed the dream, have come to wait out their time. The young men with the honorable-discharge buttons upon their collars will do well to spend some time talking with the inmates of the Pioneers' Home. "Inmates" is the wrong word. These old boys, all of them over sixty-five, are guests of a grateful Territory. They are the men who stayed with the country, fought things out to a successful conclusion, and found themselves adding up the score while sitting on the stone wall bordering the Home. Most of them have spent fifty or more years battling the country. They now wait in safety, but beyond them the Territory is nearly as wild, nearly as untamed in its farther reaches, as on the day they first stepped out to do battle with it.

If the young veterans want nothing but adventure and pure hardship, are content to get up every day and struggle for living with a wild country; if they find satisfaction in cold

rain striking in their faces, bitter sub-zero weather sucking at their lungs, hard, blistered hands swinging an ax, eyes smarting over a wood fire that is burning out a hole in the frozen ground, then let them sit beside one of these old-timers. The "Pioneers" are the men who beat down a wilderness, who lived always in the presence of death, and did not provide for their old age. Alaska thinks highly of them.

While these young men, recently returned from a war of bombs and airplanes, are talking to the old veterans about a battle with nature, it is good to take a look into this ex-servicemen business.

Alaska is always held out as a lure for the returning veterans of one war or another. Back in 1867 when the land was purchased from Russia for a few dollars, the dazzle was waved in front of the eyes of veterans of the Civil War, though most of them were satisfied with a piece of the old West and did not bother to look farther. Some of them, however, did wander up to Sitka, the only well-known settlement in the Territory at the time. A few of them stayed on to enjoy the sport of shooting up the native villages that failed to cooperate with the revenue cutters controlling southeastern Alaska. Some restless souls followed the missionaries' paths, mushing up and down the interminable stretches of the Yukon. For the most part, though, Alaska was ignored by veterans of the War Between the States.

Perhaps it was just as well, for life in those early days just after the acquisition of the land from Russia did not tend to foster dreams of peace and quiet and contentment. The Indians were still not reconciled to giving up their land, and Alaska was operated off the back of the Government's hand, as an afterthought.

The Spanish-American war was a side show to the big Klondike gold rushes of 1898. The news of Teddy Roosevelt's doings trickled into Dawson to light up an otherwise drab

day in the diggings around the creeks. The lure for the veterans, however, came in late 1899 and 1900 when gold was discovered on the beaches of Nome.

The transportation companies, realizing the stirring and restlessness that inevitably follow a war of any kind, started swinging the bait with alluring stories of the golden sands of Nome, claiming that for a stretch some 20 miles wide and 250 miles long, there was gold so thick it could be spread like butter on sandwiches. Thousands and thousands of lucky little fellows, so said the steamship companies, were calmly bringing in for themselves $300 or more a day, just for the little trouble of lifting the sand and letting it flow back through their fingers. Turn your back on the beaches, the advertisements ran on, and the tundra was waiting to be uncovered to the tune of $4,000 a ton, while there were $500 nuggets waiting to be sent home for Christmas presents.

In response to the glowing invitation, 10,000 people, a good many of them veterans of the Spanish-American War, left Seattle in June of 1900 and steamed up through the breaking ice along the Seward Peninsula into Nome to join the thousands who had gone before or who had come overland from other disappointing areas throughout the Territory. There the war veterans, along with the others, milled about in bitter aimlessness, trying first to find the gold, which was coming in five- and ten-dollar dribbles from an area less than a mile long, trying next to find food among the mobs that jammed the beaches, trying last of all to secure some shelter in the tent city that sprang into being on the beaches of Norton Sound.

There was bitter disillusionment, there was smallpox, typhoid, and there was sudden death in the drunken quarrels incessantly raging. The 10,000 melted away to 1,500 who were supplying the needs of the mines ringed about in the tundra. Rex Beach wrote a book about all the excitement,

and the veterans went back to the States to forget about Alaska.

After the First World War the Government was a bit slow in taking up the cry that Alaska and veterans go hand in hand, but in 1922 wise, judicious Secretary of the Interior Fall, spurred on by a great love for the returning soldiers and a desire to see Alaska prosper under their activity, sent out a clarion call, "Help us liberalize the laws and open up Alaska that the boys back from the war can do what their forefathers did in California in 1849. Oil has been flowing into the Arctic at Cape Fleming for years, perhaps centuries."

The Secretary's intentions about giving the oil lands to the veterans were good. It was unfortunate that even while he was sounding the clarion call, he became involved in a deal whereby some of the big oil companies were being rewarded as returned veterans dream of being. In the hubbub, Alaska was forgotten again.

Another twenty years went by with no wars and no one giving a hoot whether a veteran spent his bonus in Nome or Miami. But then came the Second World War, and immediately the cry went up—in the States—to tie in the ex-soldiers and Alaska. It seems a Federal policy to try to get the veterans out of the continental United States just as quickly as possible. Send them off to Alaska. Let them do what their great-great-grandfathers did after the Mexican War, or their great-grandfathers after the Civil War, or their grandfathers in the Spanish-American War, or their uncles and fathers in the First World War.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt discovered Alaska in August of 1944. In a speech at Bremerton Navy Yard on the 13th of that month, immediately after his return from peering at the rain-drenched Aleutian bases through the rolled-up, smeary windows of an automobile, he broadcast to the

nation: "We are told that a number of men at this place (Kodiak) and other posts are considering settling in Alaska after the war is over. I do hope this is so because the development of Alaska has only been scratched and it is still a country of pioneers, and in one sense every American is a pioneer . . . Alaska and the Aleutians [are] a place to which many veterans of this war, especially those who do not have strong home roots, can go to become pioneers. Alaska is a land with a very small population, but I am convinced it has great opportunities for those who are willing to work and to help build up all kinds of new things in new lands."

Governor Ernest Gruening, top man in the Territory, helped to stir up the flame when his provocative article entitled "Go North Young Man" appeared in a national magazine. Just to make the lure world-wide, the article was picked up by the *Reader's Digest* and sent into the distant places of this earth that are reached only by that magazine and the mail. After the distribution of Governor Gruening's ideas, the chambers of commerce in the Territory received letters from as far off as South Africa, wanting to know just how to get into the favored land.

In June of 1945, with the war still an active fact in the Pacific, Congress started to do something about diverting the new-found energies of the veterans and those who were about to become veterans—some eleven million of them—into northward channels. Congress was aided by the fact that the veterans themselves were showing a g eat deal of interest—judging by the extent of letter writing.

The Smaller War Plants Corporation, Office of Reconversion, submitted a report that so attracted members of Congress it was printed up as a House Document. The second sentence of the report holds out the lure with this tantalizing statement, "Opportunities are to be made available in Alaska to war veterans—specific Government aid and

facilities are being developed primarily with a view of assisting those who served the Nation in the war."

A very sensible remark in the report is, "It is certain large numbers of veterans will go to Alaska after the war regardless of the planning or lack of planning by various government agencies." The report might also have added that a good number of disgruntled veterans are already on their way out of the Territory with the bitter feeling that the government and all its planning agencies can very well give the Territory back to the Indians. The report might also caution the veterans against the sudden flood of emotion on the part of Alaskan pioneers of four or five years' standing that has suddenly prompted them to turn over their businesses (for a good consideration) to the veterans, mentioning, vaguely, ill health or the need for Janie's education.

It is true the soldiers are coming in a tide that is inevitable. The chambers of commerce hope they will come as tourists, though any preparation for a flood of tourists is still in the dream stage. If these veterans get their backs up and refuse to come as tourists but as job seekers or home seekers, the chambers hope prayerfully they will come well stocked with money, ready to lay out plenty of cash during the weeks and months it will take them to get adjusted. Most of all they hope the ex-servicemen will have enough money with them to pay their way back to the States if the going gets too tough.

Just a few months ago a woman and three children walked down the gangplank of a steamer that put into a lonely cannery to take out a few last cases of fish. She stood upon the deserted beach, breathed deeply of the air and said, "Alaska is a wonderful country." She rolled her r's with great affection. Now in Canada a woman with three small children would not be permitted to walk ashore, a stranger in a strange land, with no visible means of support, no sure destination, and no one to take her and the children by the

hand. But since Alaska is a part of America and America is a free country, no one thought of stopping the woman. The boat sailed, and the cannery watchman came out to greet the newcomers.

When he asked the woman what she intended to do with herself and her three children in a closed cannery with the winter coming on, she retaliated with the "wonderful-country" talk, then added with great honesty, "Alaska is a generous country. She will take care of me and mine."

So the cannery watchman sent a message over to Juneau. The marshal came in a power launch, took the woman and her brood to that city, escorted them aboard a steamer, and shipped them back to Seattle. The episode cost the Territory $200.

The little woman was no veteran in any sense, but it is readily understandable why the chambers of commerce are anxious that, as a basic requirement, a person coming up to the Territory have in his pocket enough money to leave with if he wakes up some dreary morning and decides Alaska is not the place of his dreams.

But soldiers are coming, and there is no stopping them. You can tell a man that while southeastern Alaska is a land of great natural beauty, it is rain-drenched and its fishing industry well saturated, and he will still come to see for himself. You can tell him that the Interior of Alaska not only breeds a strong race of people, but also great cold and vast green and white stretches of loneliness, and he will come anyway. You can tell him that prospecting takes a great deal of skill and knowledge, that the big companies are firmly entrenched in the workable areas adjacent to the few towns and villages of the Territory, and he will still come with the dream of squatting by a swift-flowing stream with a gold pan twirling in his hand. You can tell him that living is exorbitantly high in the Territory and that with the subsiding war

boom jobs are none too plentiful, but he will walk into the steamship office, plunk down the money for steerage passage, and walk aboard an Alaska-bound steamer with the price of a pack of cigarettes in his pocket.

You cannot get away from the fact that the country has a lure, a fascination that in many cases will not leave until a man sees the country. Not only the men. There are today hundreds of girls and women—good girls, girls who were born and raised "right"—who are trekking north to Alaska because they always wanted to see the land—nurses and waitresses and stenographers and newspaper reporters. For a woman, it is not bad. Alaska is still a fine place in which to acquire a husband.

There is a restless movement northward. The ships are crowded, the planes jammed. A man begins to wonder, "How long has this been going on? Why does Alaska have such a powerful attraction?"

Blame it on the Russians.

Back in 1728 when the English colonies were very proud of having pushed as far west as the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, the Russians had stabbed through the entire breadth of Siberia and come to rest on the Peninsula of Kamchatka. They stood still for a space until Vitus Bering came along, the man who later gave his name to the Bering Sea.

Bering was a man with an idea, an idea that somewhere out in the vague distance beyond Kamchatka was a great land, probably a continuation of the North American coast. Since Peter the Great was a man to listen to ideas and act upon them, he commissioned Bering to take two ships out of Kamchatka and explore the great beyond, keeping Russia always in mind while doing the exploring.

Bering went out on a cruise with one ship, and just barely glimpsed things to come. He discovered St. Lawrence Island

and one of the Diomede Islands, but a dense fog kept him from seeing the coast of Alaska only a short distance away. His luck could have been no worse had he sailed across the Pacific, discovered Catalina Island, and not sighted the California coast a few miles beyond.

The eminent scientists of the Russian court derided Bering when he returned with his stories of gallant efforts and spectacular failures. The Academy of Science sat him down in a corner while it drew up plans for an expedition the like of which the world had never seen. By 1741 the big push to Alaska was ready to get under way. Bering was permitted to command the expedition.

This time he did push on all the way. There was no fog and he saw the 18,000-foot peak to which he gave the name Mount St. Elias, still a welcome sight to steamers going across from southeastern Alaska to the Westward country. He turned north and west again, glimpsed Kodiak, the Alaska Peninsula, and an island that later was named Shumagin, after a sailor who died there from scurvy. This death was a prelude to what was coming.

Bering sailed on down the Aleutian chain, while one after another of the crew fell before the dragging sickness of scurvy. Even Bering himself was hit, and pulled himself around the bridge more dead than alive. Twelve men had already died, and of the remaining sixty-five, only three were able to be on deck. They hung on for another week while seven more died. Then they were driven ashore upon a small island and the ship was completely wrecked.

Thirty-one men of the original expedition died, and one of them was Bering. They gave the island his name and buried him in the sand.

One might think the disasters attending Bering and his crew would cast a shadow over any enthusiasm for further exploration and exploitation. The stories of death and hard-

ship the survivors brought back to Kamchatka might have done just that, except for the fact that in their boat made from the wreck of the original vessel they also brought back $50,000 in skins from fur seals, foxes, and otters. The lid was off and the first rush to Alaska was on.

Russian traders took off in every imaginable kind of craft and headed for the promised land. They got the furs, and they murdered the natives of the Aleutian Islands in wholesale lots, and they entrenched themselves for a 100-year domination of the country.

Years later, under American guidance, it was to be liquor salesmen who rose to great heights in Alaska, but toward the end of the eighteenth century it was a dry-goods salesman from Siberia, a fellow named Alexander A. Baranof, who became the big man of the country, the chief director of the Russian-America Company. Baranof's name has since been triply immortalized—on an ex-Grace-line ship drafted for Alaska service, on a wooded island, and on Juneau's large and modern hotel. Today the first thing one sees as the ship comes into the harbor of Alaska's capital city is the huge green neon sign, *The Baranof;* and plastered all over the docks are the red and gray signs, "Meet me at the Baranof."

Baranof was a success in every sense of the word. He organized the country into districts, established trade relations with the British and Americans, sent ships all over the Pacific, and completely enslaved the Aleuts. After he had sucked the Aleutian chain dry, he picked up his establishments, bag and baggage, and moved on down to Sitka. His domain there became known all over the world as a great place in which a sailor might have a good time.

Good men cannot live forever. On his way home to Russia, where he intended to live quietly and peacefully, enjoying the fruit of his labor and that of several thousand enslaved

Aleuts, Baranof died. His body was slipped quietly into the Indian Ocean.

Life was a bit dull around Sitka after the passing of the great man, and no one else came along worthy of having a hotel named after him. The Russians were beginning to tire of Alaska, and to be afraid England would swallow it. They were glad to have the land taken off their hands by Secretary Seward in 1867 for $7,200,000. Five days later, two liquor stores had opened in Sitka, the town was carved up into lots, and Alaska was off to its new destiny under the Stars and Stripes.

For the next thirty years the history of Alaska was written in the little town of Sitka, for very little of the comings and goings of men in the other areas of Alaska was recorded. The enslaved Aleuts were shunted back to the Aleutians, but the Tlingit Indians of southeastern Alaska were not entirely reconciled to their position in the new order. There were murders on both sides, until the new rulers of the land finally got the upper hand with the aid of revenue cutters equipped with guns. The popular manner of settling a dispute was to use an Indian village for target practice. By 1898 the Indians had been definitely eliminated as a possible threat to the future prosperity of Alaska.

The wild, screaming gold rush of 1898 was directed primarily to the tributaries of the Yukon River in Canadian territory. Alaska came into the gold-mining picture only as a backwash of the original stampede in Canada. It is true that gold was originally discovered in Juneau as early as 1880 and Circle was a boom town in 1894, but the big publicity did not start for Alaska until the fever at Dawson had subsided and the disappointed seekers after gold had begun to drift down the Yukon into American territory, exploiting earlier-known discoveries and bringing new ones to life.

Nome got the spotlight in 1899, followed by the Fairbanks strike in 1902, and lastly the big Tolovana stampede in 1914. In between, smaller strikes were made along the Yukon and in the Copper River and Susitna basins.

After those exciting years of new discoveries and new stampedes, the land began to recede very gradually in the consciousness of the outside world. But the completion of the Alaska Railroad in Fairbanks in 1923 acted as another page of advertising and opened up the Interior to the spreading waves of tourists. The Territory weathered the depression with little ill effect, and President Roosevelt brought about another great burst of activity in the mining industry when he increased the price of gold. But the greatest boost of all since the Nome stampede was the Second World War.

It was late in the thirties when Simon Bolivar Buckner, then just another army officer, came up to Alaska with the announced intention of seeking a site for a proposed army airfield. The various towns were deeply interested and showed the general their airfields, pointing out their possibilities as military sites. The Army delayed and looked around, and the matter disappeared from the front page of the Territorial newspapers. In those prehistoric days of 1939, little was known about the ease with which a river could be diverted and the old bed filled by tearing a convenient mountain to shreds to create vast airfields within a matter of weeks or months.

Then the Navy started very quietly to recruit workers, gather materials, and send them out to Kodiak Island off the Alaska Peninsula to build a base. While the men up there were still laboring in the rain and fog, the raid on Pearl Harbor broke over the country and the second gold rush to Alaska was on.

Still a military secret is the amount of money spent by the Government in leveling airfields, building bases, crashing

through roads, running pipe lines, building refineries, and doing every conceivable thing necessary to convert a country from a wilderness into a bristling fortress. Approximately 600 million dollars in gold has been taken out of Alaska in all the years since 1880. When all the figures are in and recorded, it will be shown that more than that was thrown back into the Territory and adjacent Canadian land in the four years from 1941 to 1945. The Canol project alone represents a 134-million-dollar outlay, while the Alaska Highway totals up to 160 million.

Only the Army knows how many civilians were imported into the Territory for construction work, which went on at top speed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for four years without interruption. As fast as one base was completed, the men and equipment were shoved out to another.

While southeastern Alaska received its supply of Coast Guard and Navy establishments and multi-million-dollar barge relay stations that were scarcely used, the Interior of Alaska was being sprinkled with huge airfields and bases. Before the war, Chilkoot Barracks with a few hundred soldiers was the only military station in Alaska. Within two years Fort Richardson, just outside Anchorage, was brought into being, and gave shelter to 75,000 soldiers. And Fort Richardson was only one of many forts.

While the Japs were still out at Kiska and Attu, Dutch Harbor was built up into an amazing military establishment at the head of the Aleutian chain. Then the Army went ashore at Amchitka, right under the noses of the Japs entrenched a few miles away, and started to build a base. Behind the Amchitka boys, at Adak and other spots on the chain, new airfields, new camps, new harbors were slugged into being. With the Japs gone forever, the Army moved into Kiska and Attu and several other near-by islands to establish

jump-off stations right into Japan itself. Airplanes took off every day to bombard the Japs in the Kuril Islands. Only the end of the war kept a hundred thousand troops from taking the final leap over the intervening waters.

The second gold rush flourished, and money poured out upon the land in unbelievable amounts. Civilian construction workers earned $140 a week, fifty-two weeks a year—a far better return than most of the gold seekers ever obtained back in 1898. Those civilians who had the foresight to obtain gambling concessions or were able to smuggle in liquor to the island outposts at sixty or seventy dollars a quart, amassed small fortunes of at least $25,000 a year.

On the mainland, Juneau and Anchorage and Fairbanks braced themselves and gathered in goodly portions of the construction workers' pay in return for services rendered. Seattle, too, was on the receiving end of the money poured out to the workers in the Aleutians.

It was all very mad, all very wonderful, but now the war and the gold rush are over, and it will be interesting to see what will come to the Territory as the days of normalcy overtake it.

Few of these young men with the gold discharge emblems in their lapels are interested in history. They don't care very much what the Territory was like 200 years ago, or twenty years ago, or even two years ago. What they are interested in is Alaska right now, today.

Get them away from the old men sunning themselves on the wall outside the Pioneers' Home, get them away from Sitka with its history and its memories. The past is now done. What goes on today?

# MARCH

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

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|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 33.7 | New York | 38.0 |
| Anchorage | 23.4 | St. Paul | 29.3 |
| Fairbanks | 9.5 | Spokane | 39.9 |

The third month of the year is still harsh winter throughout the Territory, although sub-zero temperatures are slowly disappearing from the recordings. In the Interior the muskrats, the beavers, the wolves, coyotes, wolverines, marmots, and squirrels sniff cautiously at the tempting bait set out by trappers who are padding across the land with the ending of the "big freeze." The air is crisscrossed by high-flying planes going into Bethel, Nome, Moses Point, and Barrow. Down in the Panhandle the land is showing the first signs of crawling out from under the snow blanket.

In the fishing towns, heavy-booted fishermen are stomping down to the waterfront each morning, kicking at stiff hawsers on the decks of little boats, spreading out engine parts in the cold March sun.

Anchorage has meetings of architects and building contractors looking impatiently at thermometers, and Fairbanks is taking a last fling at winter with its boisterous Ice Carnival and Dog Derby, but in southeastern Alaska, men are getting ready to fish.

CHAPTER THREE

# The Rain-washed Road to Glory:

## MARCH IN KETCHIKAN

NEARLY seventy years ago John Muir, the great American naturalist, left his bride of a few weeks and went exploring by canoe throughout southeastern Alaska. There were 11,000 living in the region at that time, 90 per cent of them natives. The few whites were concentrated in two towns: Wrangell, which Muir said had a "devil-may-care" abandon, and Sitka, which he dismissed as having a "rusty, decaying look."

The 11,000 have increased to 25,000, and the two towns have been joined by four others. Here and there are radios, hot dogs, an occasional movie, and three daily newspapers. Aside from these advanced places, the jays and porcupines have things pretty much their own way. One element in the region has resisted the forward march of civilization. It was raining in 1878—it is still raining today.

Southeastern Alaska comprises a strip of mainland approximately thirty miles wide and about 350 miles long, the whole known as the "Panhandle" of the Territory. There are a few large islands like Admiralty, Prince of Wales, and Baranof, and a great number of small islands and rocks. The whole region is a continuation of the coast range of British Columbia and the Olympic Mountains of the state of Washington; and it is the partial submergence of this portion of the coast range that accounts for the maze of islands, chan-

nels, long inlets, and fiords. Through these islands threads the famed Inside Passage to Alaska, without which several million tourist travel folders would never have been printed. Even without the folders it is a region of breath-taking beauty, a sight that cuts deep into a man's mind and stays with him forever.

There are little towns hidden about southeastern Alaska, little fishing villages pushed behind inlets with barely 200 people, white and native, to give the places names. A handful of fishing boats, trolling arms high in the air, the mournful chug of an outboard motor as it crisscrosses on a quiet rain-washed branch of the Pacific, and in the distance, perhaps, the red sheds of a cannery—these mark the towns. There is a glut of little places, and their names roll nicely from the tongue—Myers Chuck, where fifty people take a living from the ground and the waters; Hydaburg and Kasaan with their 400 Haida Indians, most of them fishermen; Craig with its 230, and then Angoon, Funter, and Port Alexander.

These are the little, hidden places, where men are still of the sea and the forests, and where there is still evidence of the Russians and the first coming of the Americans from the South. Beyond these are the three towns whose names are prominent in every steamship folder—Wrangell, Petersburg, and Ketchikan.

These are the giants of the Panhandle, giants even in peacetime, before the war swelled their numbers. There is Wrangell, situated in beauty on the round arm of the harbor. Its 1,200 inhabitants take a living from lumbering, fur farming, salmon fishing, and the tourists who stop by to look at the crumbling reminders of the days when the Stikine Indians were a great people.

Petersburg has a population of 1,300. It has clean homes and smelly fish docks, and handsome little Norwegian children play on the planked streets. In the holds of the fish

boats, the yellow-skirted, booted fishermen jab thin spikes into the heads of beautiful dead salmon and flip them into the waiting buckets. On the shore are a new church and fine, white-painted houses with flowers blooming in their gardens. Handsome homes for the Whites, but the Indians live in shacks on Mitkoff Way.

Ketchikan calls itself the "First City of Alaska" and claims that more salmon is canned there than in any other city in the world. There are 5,000 or 6,000 people to support the claim, depending upon the number of boats crowding the dripping docks. A man is lucky if he sees the First City, shoved against the green bulk of Deer Mountain, while it is bathed in sunlight—its colors of green, red, gray, yellow, rust and black standing out sharply in the sun. Lucky, because in the month of March, and in every month, the rain is everlasting. On only three days out of the thirty-one in March is no rainfall recorded.

Nothing has yet been written about southeastern Alaska and Ketchikan in which the author has not rushed into print with the startling fact that the "climatic conditions are surprisingly favorable. According to U. S. Weather Bureau figures, July is the warmest month with an average of 57.6 degrees, while January averages 33.1 degrees. The rainfall is fairly heavy, 151 inches annually." That last statement is prudent, to say the least, for rain and Ketchikan are synonymous. In March it rains in the morning, at noon, and again in the evening—not the terrifying, drenching downpour of the States, but a slow, persistent drizzle that makes rubbers a constant necessity. It comes slowly and quietly, and after a time a man ceases to think about it. It is like the air he breathes or the food he eats—always close at hand or just past or just about to appear. Slow, soft, eternal. Enough to keep one's topcoat continually damp, not enough to justify the confinement of a raincoat. But it is there.

No one stays at home because of the rain. Even the baby carriages have cellophane covers so that the mothers can take them out in the midst of the rainfall. And the common remark of skippers of Alaska boats is that the people of Ketchikan have webbed feet. The little children play in the streets in the rain; the older ones walk to and from school in the drizzle, their green slickers gaudy with KAY HI emblazoned on them; the oldsters go about their businesses. No one gives the rain a thought.

At odd times the sun comes out and stays for a day, or even three days or a week. Beyond that the papers go into hysterical raptures over it, the streets begin to get dusty, and everyone drops whatever is at hand and goes for a picnic outside the town.

If you are to like southeastern Alaska at all, then your heart must go out to this First City, for Ketchikan is typical of the Panhandle district. The rain quickens the spirit and the people are energetic and forward-looking. One of the most modern sawmills on the Pacific Coast is headquarters for the spruce-logging industry of the area. And with little publicity there flourishes all about the town a highly mineralized region, noted for gold, copper, and other minerals.

Taxis and trucks rumble along the planked street paralleling the waterfront. Here are modern stores with ornate trimmings and two small movie houses. There are two daily newspapers, both of them full of the aggressive, fighting spirit that never fails to keep all of Alaska's newspapers in a continual turmoil. And on this March day, as on March days for the past twenty or thirty years, the newspapers are still talking hopefully of the pulp-paper mills which are just about to locate in the area, or which plan to locate, or which may locate—but after thirty years are still only so much space in the newspapers.

Now that the war is finished, the town is deeply conscious

of the role it will play with the coming tide of tourists. In an editorial in the Ketchikan Chronicle the editor plugged for a road around Revillagigedo Island, on which the town is situated, calling for the opening up of the Behm Canal District with all its potential resorts. He pointed out the possible boat harbors, the hot-spring resorts, the ski runways that could be constructed, and listed the fishing streams and lakes, the hunting lodges and lake resorts that might come to the fore—and all of them meaning new income and employment to Alaskans.

This is the first Alaskan town to be seen by tourists coming north by boat or by plane, now that Pan American lands on Annette Island just across a narrow channel from Ketchikan. Yet faced with the tide of newcomers, the fact remains that Ketchikan's hotels do not compare well with those of Juneau and Anchorage farther north. If the merchants of the town can entice the tourists off the ships to stay for a few days, the tourists must accept what the present hotels have to offer. Perhaps the town is more interested in its salmon. After all, the tourist industry before the war ran only to 36,000 people, while the salmon industry yearly produced at least four and a half million cases.

The salmon industry is the life blood of Alaska and the whole heart and soul of Ketchikan. If all the salmon caught each year throughout the world were jammed into eight mammoth tins, five of those tins would come from Alaskan waters. If each tin held a million cases of salmon and each case sheltered forty-eight one-pound tins of the sort that eventually find their way to the dinner tables of the world, the sum would go into the hundreds of millions of tins. In 1945 Alaska packed 4,294,265 cases of salmon, and this was a poor year—600,000 cases short of the previous year.

For Alaskans the life history of the salmon is commonplace, but for outsiders little is known of the fish save that

it is convenient to buy at the grocery store in a tin can.

High up in a cold, shallow Alaskan stream tiny minnows, under an inch in length, swim endlessly about in aimless circles. There is one such stream in the heart of Ketchikan. The minnows swim about, content to live on the microscopic plants that swarm in the stream and to escape death from the enemies with which nature has surrounded them. Then nature turns them about and stops their endless circling. The fingerlings head back downstream toward the ocean. When they near the mouth of the stream, they flit across a whitened plank sunk flush in the dark sand. Unknown to them a Fish and Wildlife Service employee stands above, counting their fleeting shadows. In other streams, some of the fingerlings are taken out, tagged with celluloid buttons, and sent on their way.

For two years they vanish in the depths of the Pacific—the very depths, for no man yet has seen a trace of the salmon during those twenty-four months after they disappear from the spawning grounds. Out in the Pacific their numbers are decimated, for there is cannibalism of the rankest kind, with the larger fish eating the smaller, and with seals and sea birds eating the larger fish, and those in turn fleeing from their own enemies.

With the end of the two years, the surviving salmon, now full grown, start beating their way back through the depths of the ocean toward the region where they began life. When they come near to the shores of the islands of Alaska, they rise toward the surface, closer to death—for the fishermen are waiting.

Some of them follow herrings twirling endlessly in the water, not recognizing the danger from the dark hull of the tiny trolling boat overhead. Large firm jaws close about the herring, the hook sinks deep, and the twisting king or coho is pulled aboard the wet deck of the troller where he flops

about in tremendous heaves until a short thick club brings an end to living.

Others of the salmon run the gauntlet of the purse seiners and the gill netters, while still others find themselves fighting against the strong meshes of a fish trap placed far out in sheltered salty waters. A fish trap is a stationary device, consisting of chambers in which the fish are entrapped. Piles are driven into the ground and webbing is hung upon them to make the chambers fish-tight. The salmon follow along the curving knots until they reach a sharp corner of netting. Here they mill about continuously, for sharp corners are to them an end to instinctive motion. They cannot go forward and the strong hand of nature holds them from going back. Above them a keen pair of eyes watches. When the trap tender with its stubby scow comes in sight, a scoop net is lowered and the fish are hauled up, squirming and protesting, to die quickly in the wooden pens of the scow. Nothing else is so brutally efficient as the trap. Twenty thousand salmon can be loaded on the scow in twenty minutes and sent on their way to the nearby canneries and the waiting, shining cans, the clean yellow cases.

There are a few of the original fingerlings left that find their way into the comparative safety of the fresh-water streams where they were hatched. In fresh water no white man may move against them, but where man has stepped back in the ruthless hunt, nature has pushed forward other enemies. A black bear ambles down to the edge of the stream, sniffs cautiously, and flops into midstream, waiting. When one of the salmon comes flashing by, he dips his opened mouth and comes up with a squirming fish. A hungry bear can eat a dozen salmon in a day, and in Alaska there are a hundred thousand bears, a good many of them around the salmon streams of the Panhandle.

Until one has seen a salmon stream at the height of the

spawning season, it is impossible to picture the hordes of fish pushing their way into fresh water to spawn and die. The fish come so thick they crowd shoulder to shoulder in the narrow turns of the streams. There are fish before and behind, above and beneath. Those beneath the surface crowd upward and force the fins and heads of the upper tier out of the water, so that the stream of water vanishes and there remains only a squirming mass of fish.

In salt water the salmon are trim, symmetrical beauties, but immediately after entering fresh water their habits and appearances change radically. Fighting upstream against strong currents and waterfalls, many become exhausted by the long struggle, their ripe flesh hanging in ribbons from their bodies. They cease to eat; a prominent hump appears on the backs of the males, the upper jaw elongates and develops a pronounced downward hook and the long curving teeth protrude. The color undergoes a similar change. The head becomes greenish, while the body becomes a dark red. Often they turn over quietly, their mission not yet accomplished, and die in the stream, drifting back to sea.

The fish gradually work upstream to the spawning-grounds, where they lay their eggs in the gravel during the summer and fall. These spawning grounds may be barely above salt water or they may be more than 2,000 miles up large rivers like the Yukon. Every obstacle in the path is overcome, or the fish die trying.

Even before they finish spawning the fish become emaciated; large discolored spots appear like sores on the body, and they are entirely unlike the eager fighting fish that entered the stream a few weeks earlier. Within a few days after spawning, every salmon, male and female alike, dies, and the cycle is completed.

In the salmon family there are reds, kings, pinks, chums, and cohos, but of these the pinks furnish the bulk of the

southeastern Alaska pack. Pink is a pretty name for humpback. A grocer can sell pink salmon, but he would have trouble ridding his shelves of the same product under the name of humpback. This is the smallest of the Pacific salmon, ranging from three to six pounds in weight. When in the sea it is light colored, with a light grayish back, silvery sides, and white belly. In fresh water it becomes humpback and earns its name. The grotesque curving of its jaws and the distortion of its body is carried to an extreme beyond any of the other salmon. But the world knows nothing of the humpback or the curving jaws, for over a hundred million shining cans of the pink salmon will slide this year across the grocery shelves.

Between 1867 and 1945 well over a billion and a half dollars' worth of fish was taken out of Alaskan waters. During the last few years the value of the annual catch has been about $40,000,000, of which less than $1,000,000 was returned in taxes each year to the Territorial Treasurer.

A good deal of the billion and a half went to the absentee owners of the canneries sitting out life in Los Angeles and Chicago and New York. A good deal of it has gone in wages to the 25,000 people engaged in the industry in Alaska, half of them Whites, 6,500 of them Alaskan Indians, the rest a tide of Filipinos, Mexicans, Chinese, and Puerto Ricans, who come in a solid wave each year to spend the summer months sweating in the long, red cannery sheds. Only a small part of the money stays with the trollers and seiners who fish out of Juneau and Ketchikan and Petersburg and the other little ports hidden in the welter of islands.

Some of the trollers and seiners are native Indians, but a good many of them are men who trace their blood lines back to distant homes in the Scandinavian Peninsula. There is no denying that Finns and Norwegians and Swedes make the best fishermen in Alaskan waters. They form

the backbone of Alaska's $40,000,000 fishing industry.

One of the fishermen stands down by the greasy dock, spitting over into the oily waters lapping against the fat pilings. The name he gives comes out in a twisted jargon of vowels and consonants that spells something familiar in Finland but sound strange to our ears. Exzy Verst is as close as one can make it out.

Exzy is a Finn—a tough, old, weather-beaten Finn, ugly as an old shoe. His face cracks into a half smile and his teeth are disreputable, but the lines in his face are kind, and his words, while they are loud and insistent, will not hurt. He is fifty, and ten years ago he returned to Boston, where he met a girl who stepped from a Finnish boat. He brought her back to Alaska. Three tow-headed children complete the family, one of them a boy who screeches forever while he practices horribly on a violin, and the other two little girls of five and four who eat dirt out in the yard by the mud puddles and must have their stomachs pumped out in the hospital.

Exzy goes off to fish for three, four, or five months in the spring, summer, and fall. But because he is shrewd and somewhere far back in the dim lights of his history he was beaten and kicked while he learned the value of money, at a bargain price he buys himself a narrow strip of land. Even in Ketchikan there are good neighborhoods and bad ones. Egged on by his shrill-voiced wife, Exzy buys in the good neighborhood. But they are good people, solid people, and their strange voices come from difficulties in wrestling with new words and accents, and the difficulty will stay with them all their lives.

At the very end of his land, which is only forty feet wide and 120 feet deep, he builds with his own hands, in the months when he cannot fish, a square, bulky, two-story house —nothing prepossessing in appearance but with the upstairs

converted into two tiny apartments. Ketchikan is hungry for shelter and Exzy has no trouble renting his comfortable apartments.

He fishes for a season while he regains his strength from building the house and watches his money gather in little piles. A soup is made of fish heads, and the whole family enjoys it, sucking out the eyes.

Then another fishing season is past, and Exzy is ready to go ahead with his building. On the forward part of the lot he hammers and saws and erects forms and lays shingles, and before the snows have covered him completely he has another house, this time with four apartments. The apartments are rented, and he sits back and soon it is spring again and time for more fishing.

He is not rich, but neither is he poor, and he owns his boat, his two houses, and his land. Over on an island he has mining claims that he proves up every year. His speech is still weird to the ears, and his passion for soup made of fish heads has not dimmed, but he is a solid citizen.

During this month of March he turns his attention to the *Suzy*, which he has neglected during the housebuilding. The *Suzy* is an old thirty-five-foot gas boat that he picked up for a bargain price of $800 seven years ago. He must overhaul the gear and replace that which has been lost on rocks and hidden logs. He must overhaul the motor, put in new planking, and shove the *Suzy* high on a grid while he scrapes the bottom and caulks the leaks. Exzy figures he has $2,000 tied up in this piece of the salmon industry, and he works long and hard while the salmon are running in order to realize a return on his investment.

With the opening of the season in the spring, he rigs his trolling poles (long, thin, upright fingers leaning sideways a bit from the mast) and sees to the power guerdies. Lines will be stretched from the trolling poles, and foolish salmon will

snap at the hidden hooks. Then the lines will be thrown upon the guerdies, and the flopping silver bellies will be pulled quickly aboard and thrown into the hold with a cover of crushed ice to keep them fresh until the cannery tender comes by.

This is a great game, and the fish are always the losers. But they are given a chance, a very small chance, to escape into the streams and spawn.

Not that the fish are alone in the warfare against the traps and the fishermen. On their side is the Fish and Wildlife Service, a part of the Department of the Interior, with its conservation program and its fat appropriation, to see that a few of the fish always escape the hunters to plunge into the fresh-water streams, enjoy life for a fleeting time, spawn, and die.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's rules and regulations in favor of the salmon and against the fishermen are a constant source of friction. Books have been written in which the theme is "Damn the conservation of natural resources, full speed ahead!" And there are other men, mostly congressmen and senators, totally ignorant of the matter, who view a troller heavily laden with fish with holy horror and weep unashamed tears for the hundred million salmon eggs that will never be deposited in Alaska's fresh-water streams.

The battle goes on without letup, springing up with renewed fervor at the beginning of each season. Yet despite the heavy annual catch, the pack continues to be between four and five million cases each year. Some years, as in 1945, the pack falls off, but it soon booms back.

Anti-conservationists proclaim loudly that the thinning of the ranks of the incoming salmon is beneficial, that fewer fish reaching the spawning grounds means more food and more oxygen for the tiny fingerlings. Flood the streams with fingerlings, they say, and they will kill each other off, starve

to death for lack of food, and two years later at the end of the cycle the pack will be small. Thin the ranks, let only a minimum spawn, and the fingerlings will prosper so that with the turning of the cycle, the salmon will come in silvery hordes far beyond the ability of men to catch them. They quote figures to substantiate their claims.

But to the conservationists, a fish is a fish. Take a fish out of water, kill him without giving him a chance to swim upstream, and an irreparable harm has been done, a million eggs left unspawned and a million fingerlings left unhatched.

This continuous battle raging over whether to kill the parents first and give the children a chance to expand or spare the parents and let the children smother to death in their own numbers, leaves Exzy unmoved. Mostly he wants to fish, he wants a good haul when the cannery tender comes around, and he wants a good price. While the pros and antis battle, he is busy pulling in the fish.

The use of traps that snare 20,000 fish at a time and dump them into the cannery tender in a matter of minutes provides another bone of contention.

Without the 400 traps Alaska cannot get a forty-million-dollar pack, and the packing companies cannot profitably keep the cannery lines running continuously. A person might think that Exzy hates the traps that are owned for the most part by the big companies and by outsiders whose wares are on the grocery shelves of the nation, but he does not, rather, he is envious. He looks forward to the day when he can have the large sum of money needed for trap pilings, for huge, expensive nets, and for the wages of the watchman. Some day he plans to own a trap himself, which might be a good thing.

The harm in traps is not that they can catch an unbelievable number of salmon but that most of them belong to those who are not Alaskans, to men who pitch a small per-

centage of the take into the Territorial tax coffers and take the balance to open a new grocery store in Kokomo, Indiana. If the money realized from the traps were to remain in the Territory to help open roads, to build more schools, then the war against them would gradually subside.

Salmon and halibut are plentiful—the huge bone and sinew of the entire fishing industry—but there are other fish in Alaskan waters, other fish and other strange, aquatic beings that fascinate folk in the far corners of the world. Alaska's beaches are strewn with scallops, cockles, clams, and crabs, yet only one or two sea-food establishments in the whole Territory serve them. The waters teem with shrimp, giant prawn, sea cucumber, octopus, squid, and urchin, and the markets of a distant world are waiting, but as yet nothing but a trickle has come out. As for fish, along with salmon and halibut, there are sable, bass, trout, herring, and eulachon.

The vast bulk of the salmon pack is canned. Canning is quick and results in a minimum of spoilage from fish waiting to be processed. Fat hogsheads of mild-cured salmon and halibut are produced, rolled up into the ship's slings, and sent off to European countries. There the fish is smoked and spiced and drifts back into the American markets in appetizing and palatable forms. Some Alaskans stand on the docks watching the tierces of salmon going off to distant lands, and they think of the work being created for others and ask themselves the question, "Why cannot this work be done in Alaska with work for Alaskans? Why can't we process our own goods?"

There is one Alaskan who tired of waiting and did something about it. Until June of 1945, Lyle Anderson was head of the Fishery Products Laboratory, conducted jointly by the Division of Commercial Fisheries of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Fisheries Experimental Commission of

Alaska. Lyle resigned and used his accumulated knowledge to put canned smoked salmon on the market. Canned smoked salmon is not just another name for a tin to be found on a grocer's shelf. A lot of experimentation went into it, and a lot of heartache.

Lyle selects choice salmon from the peak of the run, splits them, and removes the backbone before brine-salting and lightly smoking them with alder wood. When he removes them from the smokehouse, he skins the salmon, cuts them to size, and hand-packs them in half-pound cans. Then they are cooked for ninety minutes under pressure, wiped, labeled, and cased. As easy as that. But it is a new industry for Alaska, and the Territory is pulling for Anderson to make a success of his venture.

Harris Magnusson, a veteran in the Fish and Wildlife Service, is the present director of the Fishery Products Laboratory, which is housed in a low, one-story structure hidden behind the imposing Federal Building in Ketchikan. Just behind the laboratory is a stream running through the heart of the town where thousands of salmon swim. The tourists come in droves to stand upon a bridge and look down into the water where the salmon are spawning and dying.

Magnusson is carrying on the work originated before his time in developing a cannery loaf from parts of salmon at present wasted. In a twelve-pound salmon nearly four pounds are thrown away. Some of it is dumped on barges, towed out to sea, and thrown to the fishes. A good deal of it is dropped beneath the cannery to rot and produce the smell so peculiar to any cannery town, including Ketchikan.

For the experiments they have rescued the salmon heads, collars, tailpieces, milt eggs, and liver, ground them up, added a bit of salt and pepper, and then canned and cooked them. The product makes good oven loaves, croquettes, fish balls, and sandwich fillings. Magnusson estimates that there

are 125,000,000 pounds of salmon to be utilized every year in making this cannery loaf.

The Pure Food people have not yet given their final blessing to the loaf because some parts of the salmon are used which the American people don't ordinarily eat. People in the States have always been slow to adopt anything new in the food line. In the meantime there are several million people waiting throughout the world to be fed. And there are 125,000,000 pounds of waste salmon waiting to be utilized. As yet the two haven't been brought together, but they will be, and Alaska will benefit.

The picture is one of a mammoth industry with a fortune in dollars being taken every year. Heart and center of the industry is Ketchikan, like the spider whose web stretches out to Wrangell, Icy Strait, and Yakutat, high up to Prince William Sound and Resurrection Bay, Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and the Alaska Peninsula. On the other side of the peninsula there is another web of canneries fanning out from Bristol Bay.

Today in aircraft plants of Southern California and in Quonset huts in England men are sitting down to write letters asking about their chances to break into this forty-million-dollar industry. Others are already on the scene, looking over the bobbing fleets of trollers with a speculative eye.

There is no room for them; there is never room for newcomers in any business. It takes a fairly large sum of money just to get started in fishing. The first fishing season almost inevitably means large losses from inexperience—lines break, boats are thrown upon the rocks, fish spoil, and bad weather keeps green hands huddled in a harbor, while older men are out climbing the waves. Everything wrong that can happen will happen to inexperienced men out to do battle with the sea. You can list a hundred woes that are

waiting to fall upon them—and still they will come. A young fellow who has been throwing a landing craft up on a hostile beach will not be frightened by stories of wild storms around Taku Inlet. And if $2,000 or $3,000 are needed for a boat and gear, he'll scrape them up somehow. At least the outfitting houses and the boat yards will profit. But the men will still come, and most of them will fail before they start. Some will persevere through a season, and a few will succeed and acquire their share of the $40,000,000.

The fishermen will be uneasy at the thought of newcomers in the field, but the fish are in the ocean and owe allegiance to no one man. These new waves of immigrants will come with chips on their shoulders, and a "Keep Out" sign to them will be a flipping of the chip. Exzy Verst is watching and waiting, hoping the newcomers will use a bit of sense before plunging blindly over the pier into the water.

Exzy says if a veteran must come to Alaska with the commercial fishing bug buzzing in his ear, let him come first and spend a summer working in a cannery, getting the smell and feel of the industry. Afterwards a man green to the country should try to hire out on one of the larger boats to see just how to go about getting a salmon safely snared on a hook. If the bug is still buzzing after all these preliminary moves, then let the young fellow go out and buy his boat and gear, and may God be with him the first time he tries to cross Taku Inlet alone.

The industry's greatest need is not for more trolling boats or bold young hands to sail them, but for young men with imagination, with a special knowledge of processing sea foods, who can improve the marketing of products of the teeming waters of Alaska. There is also a need for those who will concentrate on the lesser-known fish and crustaceans and develop this angle of the business. Alaska needs men who can solve its great problem—the highly seasonal aspect of

the fishing industry. It wants work for twelve months of the year for thirty thousand Alaskans, rather than work for three or four months during the run for thirty thousand people, a third of them outsiders. Let the young men come who can solve this problem, and Alaska and the fishing industry will welcome them with open arms.

One thing is as certain as the rising and the setting of the sun—late in March of every year the silver stream will start toward the distant Alaskan shore. And the men will be waiting.

# APRIL

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau . ... . . ... | 40.6 | New York .............. | 48.8 |
| Anchorage . .. | 34 9 | St. Paul ..... ........... | 46.2 |
| Fairbanks .. . ....... | 28 7 | Spokane . .............. | 48.2 |

In April the whole Territory is astir, preparing for the coming season. Around Fairbanks the rumble of "cat" motors is heard and the harsh scrape of 'dozer blades against the frozen ground. Nearly everyone in Alaska holds at least one ticket on the $100,000 Nenana Ice Pool. The ice will roar out at a certain minute, and a fortune will pour into the pockets of the lucky guesser. From Ketchikan and Juneau the big halibut boats with their odd-looking, downward-flowing sterns chug out to the hiding places of the deep-swimming halibut.

Along the low, concrete wall enclosing the Pioneers' Home in Sitka, the old-timers sit cautiously in the sun, mufflers well up about their thin throats, while they dig into memories.

On the Alaska Highway road crews battle the treacherous spring thaws that nibble at culverts and bridge supports. In the early morning hours they still swear viciously at cold motors coughing and dying in the wilderness.

In the Kenai Peninsula moose wander down from the mountain passes and stumble awkwardly across the ties of the Alaska Railroad, galloping madly down the open stretch with the creaky trains in wild pursuit. Over the entire Peninsula is heard the sharp ringing of axes while the new settlers clear the land.

CHAPTER FOUR

# The Sprawling Empire:

## APRIL IN THE KENAI

FISHING may be bread and butter to thousands of Alaskans, but many a man turns his back on it, leaving the sweat and toil, the slime and bloodly entrails, to Exzy and others like him. Such a man, knowing that Ketchikan is merely a threshold to the vast expanse of Alaska, lifts a telephone and asks for a cab to come take his baggage down to Heckman Wharf. Sitting up front with the driver as a matter of course, he chats about the beauty of Revillagigedo, the island with the terrifying name, as the cab twists along the planked street.

On board the *Alaska* the white-coated steward carries his bags down two decks to the stateroom. He marvels at the ingenuity of the architect who could ram a double-deck bunk, a settee, and a washbasin into a space the width and length of a man's outstretched arms. This is labeled first-class accommodations, with prices to suit, but for a moment his mind flicks back to the troopship he sailed on only a year ago. On the deck above, for "just a little more," he can get a few additional inches of space for his money. But the cabin down here is still called first class.

He turns in, and all that fitful night a cargo winch moans and groans, seemingly right above his aching head. Along about four in the morning the whistle gives a mournful hoot and the ship pulls away from the dock. The winch rattles to rest, and he falls asleep.

In the dining saloon, at eight in the morning, when the

chief steward assigns a table, he sits down and begins absent-mindedly to eat prunes and cornflakes and eggs while looking around the twenty-four six-person tables crowded into the saloon. The ship is still in calm waters going out toward the Gulf of Alaska, and people are still eating normally.

During the greater part of the war the Army forbade any but bona fide residents of the Territory or essential civilians to journey to Alaska. With that restriction lifted, every boat and every plane north is taking a swarm of servicemen's wives and children, a swarm of wives and children of the varied civilians who located in the land in the war years. This trip in the greening month of April is no exception.

There is hardly a table that does not have a high chair thrust against it, or a small child of five or six with its chin hanging over the linen-covered table. Bringing in these children is a good thing. Older people or young men "without strong home roots" come and go, but once a man brings in his family, gets hold of some furniture, and builds a home, his migrations tend to slow down if not to stop altogether. And in practically every case aboard the ship where there are young children going north, the father went first, secured a job, and obtained living quarters before wiring to his waiting family.

The problem in Alaska is not to attract people—the people will come like moths to a flame—but to hold them once they are on the scene. Children are the most powerful holders God ever devised to induce a man to put down roots in a new country. A man becomes so fascinated watching his children grow that he forgets he's becoming an old man himself. And it is a good thing for the Territory for men to grow older with the security of their families growing about them. The Pioneers at the home in Sitka have served their purpose well, but their passing leaves no strong roots behind, only a series of marks across the land. From now on Alaska

must have its old people like the giants in the forests, held up on every side by seeds dropped through the years.

Seated at the table is a young man employed by the Civil Aeronautics Authority in Anchorage, returning after an annual furlough in the States. With him are his pretty wife and a two-year-old daughter, a little eel who squirms from start to finish of the meal and insists on using a fist instead of a fork. There is another baby, six months old, sleeping back in the stateroom. On the left is a bright-looking boy of nineteen, evidently of Japanese and Indian blood, quick to observe and comment. He has been in the Maritime service and is returning to Cordova after an absence of four years.

Across the table are two soldiers, soured at life in general because they are being sent back to Alaska and the Aleutians after the brief, passing bliss of detached duty in Seattle. At noon and at the evening meal they are the soul of good humour, ready with laughter and quick to help any of the scores of little children tumbling about the ship. At night, every night without exception, they drown their sorrows in a variety of liquor, never lacking for companions in the drowning.

In the coming months of summer, young women will predominate on the tourist runs, but in April there are equal numbers of men and women. There are old trappers wandering uneasily about the Territory in the off season, fishermen anxious to get back to the grounds after a trip out to the States, young girl clerks returning to their government jobs in Anchorage. There are one or two new settlers with their families, who go about talking grandly of the things they expect of the country, then subside to ask, confidentially, just what they will find. There is even one good old soul returning to Seward after a visit to her grandchildren out in the States, who hops off the ship at each port and distributes religious tracts to the longshoremen laboring on the docks.

There is the usual collection of loud-mouthed construction stiffs, floating from one distant job to another, speaking their hatred for Seattle and their love for distant cities in foreign lands, any city in any land, just so their voices are loud enough and they have a chance to impress their audience. These men, too, are the soul of animation between noon and seven each night. After that they subside to vaporous gurgling. Twelve per cent of Alaska's income is spent on alcohol, and the passengers of the *Alaska* on that voyage to the Westward strive hard to keep up the percentage.

These steamer runs are the lifeline of Alaska's existence, and it is well to sit in the social hall for a few minutes to take a look at a typical group.

The ship is pushing ahead steadily, unmindful of the cold, wet wind, the low clouds. Outside is a thick, murky dusk. At six-thirty at night, there are eighty people seated around the social hall, a room about twenty-five feet wide and twice as long, high on the boat deck. There are red rattan chairs, red cushions, and an old, dun-colored rug upon the floor. The *Alaska* was launched in 1923, and the equipment in the social hall is probably a prime souvenir of the great day.

The scores of soldiers being sent north are quartered in a special compartment up in the bow of the ship, but at night they drift back and take over the social hall, most of them playing cards, a few officers gathering women to them. There is the dull drone of voices all around and a sharp break in the sound when someone switches off the radio completely.

Aside from the clinking of glasses filled with liquor, there is no entertainment aboard—even an advertised bingo game fails to materialize. The passengers are ushered aboard in Seattle, guaranteed three meals a day, and their staterooms are dusted over lightly. On the seven-day voyage over to the Westward country they are left pretty much to their own

devices. In the prewar days there was dancing every night on all these ships and the trip was seven days of laughter instead of seven days of boredom. The change is not altogether the fault of the steamship company. These ships are still operated under the War Shipping Administration. When they are turned back to the original operators and the mad scramble for the tourist trade begins, the dancing and laughter will come back. But the staterooms won't be any larger. There is a limit to miracles.

The crews of these Alaska ships are getting louder in their demands for better living. There was a time when the seamen were herded together far up in the bow, in stinking, ill-ventilated quarters. Now they have gradually pushed back toward the passenger quarters, with more space, more ventilation, and more light. Some of the ships have been tied up for weeks at a time while the seamen sulked and the owners wrestled with the problem of giving the crews better quarters while still retaining the profit in passenger hauling.

Feeling her way in the blackness of the night, the *Alaska* thrusts a cautious bow out into the heaving waters of the Gulf. Seventy per cent of the passengers elect that moment to take to their bunks and remain there moaning and groaning for the twenty-four hours or more until the ship has crept into the shelter of Prince William Sound. The steward's department, thrifty to the last, goes about knocking at stateroom doors, blandly asking the sufferers if they intend coming down to the dining hall.

The last of the fresh milk has disappeared from the dining-room tables, and the stewards hope, with a little conniving and a lot of seasickness, that similar embarrassments in other foods will be averted. April is a trying month for Alaskan cows at the sea ports, and they can scarcely meet even the local demands. What the Territory needs is a hardy breed of cows whose milking times can be regulated like a

desk calendar in order to keep pace with the unpredictable arrival and departure of slow ships.

Out of nowhere the white-garbed stewardess appears, juggling trays and hot-water bottles, diving into staterooms, going about quickly, yet without hurry, and with a great show of competence. For lack of anything better to do, those who are well enough follow her with admiring eyes. As she passes opened stateroom doors, one can see the sick pry open their eyes, look up, and murmur a word of gratitude. Then they sink back to moan over the fact that God has mixed up so much land and so much water in the construction of Alaska.

Alaska is a sprawling empire, not in words but in fact. If the 140,000,000 people in the States were to imagine themselves spread out somewhere in the Carribbean Sea and turned their eyes northward, they would have Seattle marked down where Havana, Cuba, is located. Ketchikan, First City of Alaska, would be in the vicinity of Charleston, South Carolina. Anchorage and the Westward country would be out at Springfield, Missouri, and the Matanuska Valley fifty miles beyond in the general direction of Saint Louis. Shoved down somewhere by Dubuque, Iowa, would be Fairbanks, Queen City of the Interior, while Nome would be deep in the South Dakota plains. The Aleutians would sprawl and loop all through the southwest section of the States, on out through Arizona and New Mexico until they would wind up with Attu perched right in the heart of Pershing Square in Los Angeles. This is the width and depth of Alaska. There would be plains and vast stretches of tundra and a bare handful of long, meandering rivers; but mostly there would be long, cruel heaps of mountains and vast stretches of Pacific Ocean and the cold, dreary spaces of the Bering Sea.

The Gulf of Alaska is one such stretch of the North Pacific, and ships are in a hurry to be across its tumbling

waters and into the safety of Prince William Sound. This is a land of majesty—majesty in mighty mountains climbing as far as the eyes can see and heavily draped in snow in this month of April. It is the land of glaciers, the land of magnificent wild animals prowling the wilderness; it is the land of history, where hundreds of men died in the first fierce struggles against the onslaught of the elements.

The mountain ranges in limitless expanse along the shores of western Alaska present an almost impassable barrier with their 150-mile width thrown up like a fence against any encroaching foot. In the original madness of the gold-rush days it was thought the route over the Chilkoot Pass through Canadian territory was the only way to reach the flat lands and gold creeks of the Interior. In 1898 Capt. William Abercrombie tramped over the Copper River Valley sector here in Prince William Sound and discovered a feasible route over the Valdez Glacier into the Interior. Within two years 6,000 men followed his lead, leaving the trail studded with frozen bodies.

It was in this same region that the fabulous Irishman, Michael J. Heney, slugged it out with the Guggenheims and the Morgans and built a $23,000,000 railroad 160 miles from Cordova into Kennecott, the land of the solid copper mountains. He fought and bit and chewed, and with his working stiffs clawed a route down the tortuous Copper River until the line was completed in 1911. By that time Morgan and Guggenheim had joined hands with their enemy, knowing a good man when they saw one, and had control of the railroad. On their $23,000,000 investment, they realized $200,000,000 worth of copper ore. To make the monopoly more secure, they established the Alaska Steamship Line to haul their concentrates to the smelters in the States and realized more millions. At the end of the railroad, coming down from the copper mines, is Cordova, port of call for all steamers.

For thirty blissful years the town of Cordova boomed. Then in 1938, the ore gave out, the railroad was abandoned, and Cordova sank back to earn a living from fish and clams and crabs.

Every ounce of gold and every pound of copper once extracted from the rock gravel of Alaska is gone for all time. Early in 1941, before the full soothing effects of vast Federal expenditures were felt throughout the Territory, Governor Gruening addressed the Legislative Assembly and delivered the following funeral oration over Kennecott and Cordova:

> Kennecott . . . was one of the several really famous mines in the history of copper. Some $200,000,000 worth of copper was taken out in the course of a generation. What has the Territory of Alaska to show for those 200 million dollars today? A hole in the ground? No, worse than that. It actually has a relief problem. And three towns dependent in varying degree on the activity of Kennecott are either on their way to becoming ghost towns or are seriously impaired.
>
> The dividends from Kennecott went far and wide. They enriched many individuals who never saw Alaska and had no thought of ever coming here, or doing anything for the Territory; but relief payments paid for by the people of the Territory doubled in Cordova the year after Kennecott shut down . . . A wiser policy in those days would have been to levy appropriate severance as well as income taxes, which could easily have been borne, upon Kennecott's production and to have invested that money in an Alaska fund for the support of our schools, to build more roads, to maintain our Pioneers' Home. The example of Kennecott should be a warning.

Cordova was shaken to the roots by the closing of Kennecott, and a town of less spirit would have died quietly with no further fuss, but the thousand people there held on gamely, and today the expansion of the fishing industry and the cautious intrusion into the new fields of crab and clam canning is bringing the town back. But the old-timers still talk wistfully of the good old days when a million dollars

in copper concentrate rested every month on the wooden docks waiting for the southbound ships.

Valdez, with a population of 600, is like Cordova, a town of damp dwellings, dark against the mountains. For years its greatest distinction was emblazoned in a glittering sign painted above the dark red of the piershed—"Terminus of the Richardson Highway. Short Route to Fairbanks and Circle." Today the sign is mouldy. The Government and the Territory are building roads into various sections of Alaska and three cutoffs tap the Richardson Highway down to Anchorage, Haines, and Whitehorse. The distinction of having the only automobile road into the Interior has been lost, but there is one ray of fame still left. Valdez has 300 inches of snowfall each year, five times as much as Nome and more than twice the amount of its closest rival in the entire Territory. The town is laying plans to entice the tourists off the ships for an automobile trip into the Interior, but the competition will be keen.

Leaving Valdez and its superb landlocked harbor, the steamer passes a multitude of islands, for even in Prince William Sound, Alaskan pilots will duck for shelter behind any outcropping of rock that looms before them. Given a choice between a wide, safe, rolling sea, and narrow, calm waters sliding smoothly between barefaced rock, they take the latter every time. They point their ships at the blank walls, and crevasses open up, and the ships slip through. This is the land of the glaciers and the small floating icebergs out in the stream. On every side are vistas that would constitute 100-million-dollar tourist attractions if they were in the States. Here in Alaska the vistas are prodigal, almost as though God in a restless moment had let loose a jumble of majestic beauty—harsh mountains and softly lapping waters.

Resurrection Bay has been bathed in superlatives ever since the Russians moved into its shelter late in the eight-

eenth century. Lovers of Alaska say this is the most beautiful body of water in the entire world and claim that the navies of every nation could drop anchor and ride in safety in these mountain-locked seas. But that claim was made before hundreds and thousands of landing craft became standard equipment for the navies.

The ship enters the twenty-mile stretch of smooth water through two grim islands called Rocky and Cheval. When President Harding paid a visit to the land back in 1923, some public-spirited citizen tacked the label, "Harding Gateway" to the entrance of the bay. Appropriately enough, there is a jagged tooth of bare rock sticking squarely up in the middle of the Gateway, ready to suck to death any ship that enters with a careless pilot.

At the head of the Bay is the pride of the Kenai Peninsula, Seward, named after the Secretary of State who bought the Territory between drinks. Seward is fighting desperately against decay, against the fate of Cordova when the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad closed down. For years the town chugged along comfortably, content in the knowledge that it was the terminus of the Alaska Railroad into Fairbanks and the Interior and that every stick of freight must come to Seward if it intended to ride the rails into Anchorage and the golden heart of the North.

Then the war came, and the Army, impatient of the antiquated line running 114 miles up to Anchorage, hinting vaguely of the possible chances of sabotage to this lone stretch of rail and snarling openly at the terrific grade the dying locomotives were forced to climb in a land that was all scenic wonder, shoved through one of the longest railroad tunnels in the world at Whittier. It clipped off fifty miles of track, dropped the grade to a mere nothing, and deprived Seward entirely of its claim to being the terminus of the railroad. It was as if Miami, Florida, should come to be ig-

nored entirely by trains and steamers in favor of Jacksonville.

Whittier, not Seward, is the terminus of the Alaska Railroad. The Army still ties up Whittier facilities, and the docking area will have to be developed, but when the flood of khaki has ebbed, Whittier will come into its own.

And for Seward it is unfortunate; for Seward is a good town, a clean town, well laid out, a town where a man could bring his wife and children fresh from the States without fear that the woman would burst into tears at the drab sight and begin to sicken for her old home. It has streets well spaced in geometric fashion, clean, white homes of the bungalow type, a school that is in keeping with all the good schools functioning throughout the Territory.

Several years ago there was a disastrous fire in Seward that wiped out the downtown section by the steamer dock. It was a staggering blow, but it may have been a good thing in its way, for a new and better Seward rose from the ashes—clean, white stucco, and the shine of newly polished maple fixtures, large stores, and gleaming windows. For a town of eleven hundred, it was a great step forward. The owner of a prominent bar, in a confidential moment, leaned over and pointed proudly to the gleaming, white walls. "Fireproof, every inch of it. I didn't give a damn about expense, and it took every last penny I had—$500,000." He repeated it in a holy whisper as though not quite believing it himself. "Five hundred thousand dollars." And it well could be, for in addition to the bar there is a small hotel, the building of which took place in the middle of a war when good clean lumber ready for the carpenter was worth more than gold locked up in the ground.

Now with the shadow of Whittier and the new cutoff on the railroad, Seward is clutching at straws, whistling in the dark. A new flood of rumors comes over the town with every passing night: The dock facilities at Whittier are

inadequate. The snowfall on the cutoff is too heavy for it to be kept open all year round. The Standard Oil Company won't move its tanks to Whittier.

Alaskan cities differ from those in the States in that most of them serve a single purpose. Destroy that purpose and the city is threatened. In the States even a small town has a diversity of means for a livelihood. But in Alaska, if Ketchikan's canning industry is threatened, the shadow falls upon the entire town. In Juneau, the rumored closing of the Alaska-Juneau Gold Mine threatened to cripple the town. When the mine finally closed temporarily, only the spurt from war activity eased the blow. Fairbanks lives because it is a supply center for the placer gold-mining region of the Interior. When the war temporarily halted mining, only the creation of Ladd Field and the pouring out of Federal millions saved Fairbanks from reeling back into oblivion.

There is one spot in the sky of the future that is bright for Seward. The town is the largest on the Kenai Peninsula —there are only a half dozen in the entire area—and the Kenai Peninsula is the land of hope, the land of the letters of inquiry.

There are three well-known areas of Alaska that are suitable for homesteading—the long, winding stretches of the Tanana Valley, the concentrated area of the Matanuska Valley, and various parts of the Kenai Peninsula.

The peninsula is an odd-shaped, irregular piece of land about 160 miles long and 100 wide, jutting out like a dwarfed thumb from the mainland. What contributes to its odd appearance is the noble sweep of the Alaska Peninsula immediately beyond. Glancing at a map of Alaska, one tends to overlook the little protuberance called the Kenai in following the sharp, dagger-like thrust of the Alaska Peninsula as it sweeps outward, with the entire Aleutian chain dripping downward from it like drops of some dark liquid.

But of the two, the smaller is the better known—if for no other reason than that it is the most popular home of the Alaska moose, the largest of its kind in the world. The Alaska moose is so big—the bulls running to 1,400 pounds with an antler spread over six feet—that getting the carcass out of the wilderness and into the deep-freeze boxes is almost as monumental a problem as killing it. The willow growing on the Kenai Peninsula, the favorite food of the animal, must possess a different flavor from that in other sections of the Territory since nearly a quarter of all the moose in Alaska are concentrated in the western half of the little peninsula.

There are quite a few sportsmen who believe the area should be kept as a hunting park and the prospective farmers discouraged or chased out—but that is an issue the sportsmen will have to take up directly with the farmers.

On the southwestern tip of the Kenai Peninsula, on Kachemak Bay near Homer, there is a considerable area of agricultural and grazing land. On the west coast of the peninsula, lying along Cook Inlet, there is another area of reasonably level land suitable for agriculture. When the Territory makes this known, however, it hastens to add—in order to prevent the good people of Homer from being swamped by the wave of the future—that most of the desirable homesteads around Homer are already taken.

An Alaskan farm can be made to supply about sixty per cent of the living for a family, and a man can have a comfortable existence and educate his brood while grubbing into the soil—provided everyone pitches in and helps. Beyond that the prospect is not so cheerful. After you raise your produce, you must get it to the market, and in the entire stretch of the Kenai Peninsula there is only one road going from Seward up to Hope on Turnagain Arm. People in the Homer area must trust to boats and planes to make connection with Seward and Anchorage.

Even if roads were available, there is still the question of markets. No matter how rosy the dreams, Alaska still has only 80,000 people, widely scattered, and they can eat only a limited amount. Then, too, these people have fallen into the discouraging habit of eating canned goods and cold-storage product shipped all the way from Seattle. You can berate them for not being patriotic, but they still like Seattle goods and continue to eat them.

Anchorage is the hub of the Westward country, but Matanuska, only fifty miles away by a good truck road, has a firm grip on that area. If the people of Anchorage can be educated away from Seattle food, then Matanuska will profit, not the Kenai Peninsula. Steps are being taken, and there is much talk of a new bridge across Turnagain Arm and a network of roads spanning the peninsula to tie in with Anchorage and the Interior. But the plans are still on paper. Until they reach reality, the blooming of the peninsula is only a dream.

Development of the Kenai, development of the fisheries, development of the major forest products—the whole Territory swings back and forth on that one word, development. Tired of swinging, the Legislative Committee of the Juneau Chamber of Commerce in a report to the parent body, stated: "The vast natural resources about which we have heard so much and know so little will not stimulate settlement unless someone finds them . . . They might exist, as heralded. We do not presume to know . . ."

Congress, too, evidently got a bit peevish about this unending chant concerning development of natural resources when, in 1944, the House Appropriations Committee "unanimously kicked out," a Department of Interior request for $3,860,000, that tidy sum to be used to make an exhaustive survey of Alaskan opportunities for settlement by returning servicemen. A bit chastened, the Department of Interior

came back a year later and asked meekly for $1,072,000 for the same purpose and met with the same reception. In 1946, it whispered for a mere $20,000 for a scanning survey, and Congress was still cool to the idea.

Luckily for people who believe in exhaustive surveys, the Territorial Legislature paid no attention to any action taken by the Congress of the United States.

When the war was drawing to a close, the Legislature hopped aboard the postwar band wagon by establishing the Alaska Development Board and appropriating $60,000 for its upkeep. A good deal of the money, with the exception of the secretary's salary, is spent on postage to answer the letters of inquiry about Alaska. It is estimated that 500 persons write to the Government each week concerning the Territory. The Governor of Alaska receives fewer letters, but the number has been on the upswing each month.

The avowed purpose of the Board is to investigate and publicize the possibilities for new industrious immigrants, immigrants with capital, to make homes in Alaska. Only a little more than a year old, the Board has experienced the usual verbal barrage from senators and representatives who look down their noses at the secretary's salary and want to know why in twelve months the board hasn't completely mastered something that has remained dormant for eighty years—the problem of Alaska's development.

The Board has gone on record with the opinion that the development of the tourist business is the best and most important immediate prospect for improving Alaska's economy. No mention is made of any overnight boom in the outlook for future farmers of Alaska.

One of the greatest handicaps is the necessity of approaching the Government, cap in hand, and asking, almost humbly, for aid here or cooperation there. Unfortunately, the Alaskans, full of ideas for enticing the tourists northward

and showing them some wonderful scenery, are in the regrettable position of owning only a fraction of the land and none at all of the natural wonders. Alaskans own the hotels, restaurants, taxicabs, tourist shops, and taverns, but the Federal Government, in the form of the Department of the Interior, sits moodily upon the very things the tourists come north to see.

So the Board must respectfully call to the attention of members of Congress that for the past twenty or twenty-five years the Government has set aside large areas like Mt. McKinley National Park, with nearly 2,000,000 acres of prize scenic attractions, and Katmai National Monument, with more than 2,250,000 acres, without any provision for their development. These areas are rich in natural beauty and in wildlife, and the Board urges and earnestly hopes that the Board of Budget and Congress will approve the carefully prepared plans submitted for development.

The whole thing is very trying on Alaskans.

In the meantime, the secretary's working hours and those of two girl clerks are given over to the flood of letters which are accumulating at an alarming rate in the temporary quarters of the Board set up in the Territorial Legislature Chambers at Juneau. They are mostly written neatly in ink, with a bit of thought and always with courtesy. Once in a great while one will bob up laboriously scrawled in pencil. The letters without exception are answered. They come from farming families in the Middle West and the Northwest, and from servicemen all over the world.

"Dear Sir: In reference to your article in Collier's Magazine concerning homesteading in Alaska, we would like further information concerning the subject. At present we are serving aboard the same ship in the Navy in the South Pacific. Four of us have discussed the subject thoroughly and we understand it will not be easy. That there will be hardships and plenty of work. That

we do not mind. We would like to know what the prospects are of making a living and building toward a future. What would be the possibilities of obtaining four adjoining tracts of land? This would enable us to exchange labor. Between the four of us we could buy enough equipment that could be exchanged, that would enable us to build our homes and develop the land faster and at a more profitable rate than if we worked it as individuals."

"Dear Sir: I would like to have all the information you could give me as to settlement of farming and grazing land in Alaska. I am 20 years old, born in the U. S. A., and I need a new start. If there is any information you would like to know, just let me know. Please answer this because I am interested and I'd like to know a little about the situation before I go."

"Dear Sir: Whilst reading the Reader's Digest the other day, I came across a very interesting article with the title, 'Go North Young Man.' Having read your story over and over again, I am very keen to visit your part of the world with an object of settling down there and making a homestead. The opportunities seem great for a young fellow who is not afraid of hard work and pioneering. Given a free hand to cultivate and a good market is all I require. I'm stationed here in South Africa and want to get up to Alaska."

"Dear Sir: I am 39 years of age, have always wanted to come to Alaska, had several couples about ready to come to Alaska when the war came. Still thinking of quite a few who I would like to bring to Alaska, quite a few World War 2 veterans and families. Tell me what would be the best route to take in getting lined up for settlement of 25 or 30 families. Yours for a great future in Alaska."

To date, a personal letter has gone out in reply to each inquiry, but it may be that the secretary's enthusiasm is still at a high pitch and undaunted by the rising mound of letters that come in without ceasing. With every reply goes a 180-page booklet entitled, "General Information Regarding Alaska," which was last revised in 1941, and on which he hopes to have another up-to-the-minute revision. There are five other small pamphlets, products of the Government

Printing Office, which are also stuffed into envelopes and sent back to the inquirers. Where a specific request is made for farming information, the secretary sends the letter on to George W. Gasser, Commissioner for the Alaska Department of Agriculture. In his replies, Gasser always points out that "homesteading on a shoestring in Alaska just doesn't work out. We want to make the facts plain. We want people to know they are letting themselves in for a lot of hard work." Anything under $3,000 tends toward the shoestring level. (One Alaskan of ten years standing, in a particularly bitter mood, exclaimed, "If I had $3,000, I would never have come up to the Territory in the first place.")

Members of the Board, too, are careful to include a warning in all their replies to the would-be-settler not to come rushing up to the land of promise, but if he is not well stocked with money, to try to arrange for a job in Alaska before leaving the States. This can be done, if the jobs are there, by applying to the U. S. Employment Service throughout the States or by writing to the same office in the various large towns of the Territory. Once on the scene of the rainbow, with the security of a job to brace him, a man can look about and decide for himself just what is gold and what is glitter. A surprising number of hopefuls come charging into the Territory, take one startled look about, then hop the first boat or plane going south.

The newspapers of the States love Alaska because of the wonderful copy that is invariably furnished by prospective settlers. Every spring without fail some dreamer of a dream climbs unsteadily to his feet on a street corner back in the crowded East and announces solemnly that the wild woods are calling, that he is about to break away from it all, that he is going to pick up his family and head for the "last frontier." The more children the man has or the more bizarre his plans, the better the copy for the newspapers.

In the spring of 1940 a rugged individualist from Back East built himself an odd frame, later to be battered into the shape of a boat, loaded it on a trailer, tucked his wife and his four children in an old car, and bounced his way grandly across the continent, his trail marked by a volume of newspaper publicity generally accorded only to Presidential candidates and acrobats who cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope.

When he reached Puget Sound the pioneer glued some sticks to the ribs of his boat, slapped together a cabin out of old orange crates, made railings out of chicken wire, lashed down the steering wheel with barbed wire, then stepped in front of a microphone and whispered that he was ready to sail north to Alaska.

By that time the whole world was in on the pilgrimage. Seattle, determined to stop the nonsense, placed some kind of restraining order on the floating coffin and forbade the old man to leave the dockside. But he thumbed his nose at Seattle, sneaked his family aboard at two in the morning, and sailed beyond the limits of King County. Back East the newspapers did everything but put out special editions.

In the meantime Governor Gruening up in Juneau, souring at the reams of publicity and growing faint at the thought of monthly flotillas of orange boxes heading north to the Territory, stepped to the microphone of the local Juneau station—KINY—and pleaded with the inhabitants to ignore the brash newcomer when his "ark" came nudging around the rock dump. "Such publicity," pleaded the Governor, "is harmful for Alaska."

The ark came into the harbor and everyone in Juneau who could walk, creep, or crawl was down to see the freak that wobbled up to the float. Gruening sulked alone up in his white castle.

At the very same hour Richard Halliburton and some

mink-coated friends came into port on an elegant yacht. Not a soul went near the yacht, so great was the interest in the chicken-wired orange crate. The suspense was too much for Halliburton. He had his crew lower a launch, chuffed over to the ark, and invited the whole blessed family, from the belligerent old man down to the tiniest tot, to come over to dinner on the yacht.

Gruening took a pill and went to bed.

The changes in vocations that take place in the land are surprising, too. A lawyer will walk the streets, look with wrinkled brow on the glut of lawyers' shingles hanging from every convenient corner, and within a few weeks find he has become a building contractor. A young boy comes up full of burning enthusiasm to get out and dip for golden flakes in some silent creekbed, only to find out that he really meant all the time to wind up as a clerk behind a grocery counter. A girl comes into town endowed with great talent and with a job as announcer at the local radio station waiting for her. Yet before the month is out she decides she doesn't like the cut of the station manager's bald head, and so becomes overnight a charming ticket seller down at the airline's office. And there is the young lady who comes as a newspaper reporter only to wind up as a night-club singer in the Baranof Bubble Room.

Most of the letters of inquiry fluttering down upon the personnel of the Alaska Development Board are concerned with the chances of picking up 160 acres of land for a homesite, free for nothing. If a man has lived in a spot where scenery has been limited to the width of a thirty-foot, hot, concrete street, or who has had his romance close by the hard, clopping sound of a milkman making his early morning calls, then few things will tickle his imagination more than the thought of going up into the wilderness of Alaska, hacking out a clearing, setting up a log cabin, and resting com-

fortably by the open door with a loaded rifle while the evening dinner walks by and asks to be shot.

There is hardly an office worker throughout the entire United States, slamming down the TOTAL button on an adding machine showing the boss's profits at the end of the month, who has not wished heartily to be away from cold facts and mounting figures, into the vast, wild stretches of the unknown. Oh, to be in Alaska!

There is hardly a truck driver, pushing a grunting giant along the hot streets of Pittsburgh or Detroit or Trenton, who has not cursed a red traffic signal and moaned for the day when he would be drifting down the swift-flowing Yukon in a flat-bottomed boat, shirt open to the cool wind, steady hand on the steering oar, clear eye to the sky, a word of greeting to the cheering natives of Tanana, Kokrines, and Ruby.

There is hardly a lonesome young woman watching the years creep on with no swain in sight who has not dreamed restlessly of the wonders of Alaska where there are three times as many men as women. The dreams are intensified when she hears of the young English teacher who has gone up and married the high-school principal, of the lovely nurse who turned about and married a man with three little children, all of them less than five years old.

To everyone, Alaska has the same cautious words, "The land is here; the opportunity is here for persons skilled in certain lines, but for heaven's sake, take it easy." Get a job first or be so well-heeled with money that it will be a pleasure for the merchants and tourist shops to call you friend while you spend a year looking about and deciding.

Words of caution are heard on every hand. No doubt they are necessary. But the same phrases come up like a distant echo every time a good word is said for the Territory. The clock has struck and the hour of destiny for the Territory is

at hand, but don't start north unless you can spend a year as a gentleman of leisure calmly surveying the 365 million acres. The soldiers, sailors, and coastguardsmen are the settlers of the future, but stay below unless you are willing to forego many of civilization's pleasures and comforts.

Gov. Ernest Gruening is a man who believes fervently in the future prosperity of Alaska and who is determined to break the log jam that has held back the increase of the Territory's population. Yet he will be the first to deny that he wishes to encourage an Arctic repetition of the Oklahoma land rush. He travels constantly between the Territory and Washington, D. C., and there are newspaper reporters at every turn waiting for a word about the land to the North. Faced with such publicity, he cannot be too cautious in his words of praise for Alaska. Then, conscious of the withering blasts from the Territorial newspapers always ready for "soft-headed writers" or "government-supported tourists" who paint too rosy a picture of the Territory, Gruening hastens to add that he thinks Alaska can support a considerably larger population, but the men and women comprising that population must be prepared for hard knocks, strenuous work, drenching rainfall, long hours of darkness, and in the Interior, sixty-below winters. Gruening is another who believes the newcomers should arrive on the scene with at least $3,000 in their pockets.

Even with that chilling dose of moderation he does not satisfy his favorite critics, the Alaska newspapers, for one of them growls back that Alaska cannot stand a "considerable" increase in population, that 1,500 is all the Territory can possibly absorb in the postwar period. But Gruening is still the governor despite a circulated petition asking for his recall.

One group that took a positive stand with no straddling was a handful of congressmen comprising the Interior Sub-

committee of the House Appropriations Committee. This group evidently forgot the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, uttered just a little over a year before, expressing the hope that Alaska was the land where veterans could go to become pioneers. Either they forgot, or else, on an all-expenses-paid-by-the-government tour their first sight of the highly publicized Northland and the realization that it really was pretty rugged, came as a rude shock.

On their return to Washington in October, 1945, they submitted a report to Congress in which they said further opportunities in the Kenai and Matanuska and other isolated areas were limited and by no means as ample as some reports indicated. They stated that roads should be built through the Kenai Peninsula in order to open it up for development, but they could not recommend that returning veterans go to Alaska for homesteading without making a careful personal investigation.

A "careful personal investigation" can be conducted over a two- or three-month period, but the cost will take a terrific bite out of the $3,000 minimum Gruening advises bringing along. Congressional investigating committees have their hotel and restaurant bills, their airplane and steamship tickets paid for by 140 million Americans.

The Kenai is such a beautiful section that anyone "investigating" the Peninsula during the month of April, or in any month of the year, will be so impressed by the wonders of the land as to be forgetful of the word of caution. The train takes him from Seward out into the birchland, pokes along the milky white and pale green waters of Lake Kenai, then ducks under snowsheds dripping from the torrents of spring freshets hurtling off the mountains. At Placer River the tracks wind around scenic curves beloved of photographers but heartily condemned by the Army. The train goes past little clearings where latter-day pioneers come out to lean

against hewn logs and stare as the creaking monster goes by. Smooth-sided, white-peaked mountains wait calmly in misty clouds. An automobile road threads through the wilderness past lakes beautifully silted by soft, overlapping layers of volcanic mud, inching forward seventy-five miles to Hope on the muddy waters of Turnagain Arm.

Boats go from Seward around to Homer, where an agricultural development as important as Matanuska, but far less publicized, has taken place. Fifteen years ago there were only thirty-five people who knew the remarkably fine climate of the area. Today that number has swelled ten times over, and all the good land about Homer, as the congressmen point out, has been taken up and fenced off. But fifteen years from now, the same story will be repeated about land that is today covered by far-reaching stands of birch in some hidden corner of the Kenai.

# MAY

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau .... .. ........ . | 47.7 | New York ............. | 60.0 |
| Anchorage . ........ | 44.9 | St. Paul ................. | 57.6 |
| Fairbanks ........ ..... | 46 8 | Spokane ............... | 55.8 |

May is spring, even in Alaska. In Nome there is no darkness, only a growing impatience at the ice still locked tightly in the Sound. Fairbanks is seething with the activity of the mining companies, rushing out supplies and equipment to the dredges and the little outfits along the creeks.

The first stray tourists from the outside world come on the boats from the South, fortunate to find Ketchikan and Juneau in delightful blankets of fresh green touched with an occasional flood of sunshine. The churning waters of the Gulf of Alaska grow calmer, and the first steamers of the season to go down the Yukon begin to load on wood for the swift trip. Salmon are leaping in the still waters of southeastern Alaska where swarms of trolling boats are chugging out to get their share of the incoming tide of silver.

Up in Matanuska a farmer returns the bulldozer he had borrowed from the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation for clearing his twenty acres down by the road, slaps his Guernsey on the rump, and starts in on a plowing and sowing schedule that will carry him right on through the first of July.

All Alaska is ready to yield its riches, and this little piece of publicized earth, the Matanuska Valley, is going to lead the way in fertility.

CHAPTER FIVE

# Pay Dirt

## MAY IN MATANUSKA

IN 1935, weary of delay, the Government of the United States tried to force the issue of Alaska's development. Relief officials plucked 200 names out of a hat, labeled the owners as farmers, and sent them north to Alaska's Matanuska Valley. Only the intervention of a war, forcing the Government's attention elsewhere, saved the colony from complete disaster.

When those bewildered colonists came to Alaska they were hustled off the army transport *St. Mihiel,* rushed onto the waiting string of railroad cars at Seward, sent north with no stop for 159 miles, and plunked down at a flag station on a lonely stretch of track. They were out in the wilderness, and the eyes of the world were focused upon them.

Now things have changed. A road pushed through the rolling acres of birch in 1936, so today it is possible to drive the fifty miles from Anchorage out to Palmer and the Matanuska Valley in about an hour and a half on the bus. The driver, Slim, is tall and gaunt, but kind-hearted and as good-natured as the man in the moon is supposed to be. The twelve-passenger coach vibrates like a little cub plane as he tools it along the winding highway, but his hand is steady and sure on the wheel, and his foot is ready on the brake when he sweeps around a blind curve. Slim is working seven days a week, eleven hours a day.

The bus pounds on through the miles of the military reservation comprising Fort Richardson, biggest army camp

in Alaska, stopping only long enough for an MP to count civilian noses. It picks up a couple of GI's who are killing time, waiting for the boat to sail south from Seward to Seattle and home and freedom. Everybody else has seen Matanuska, so they want a look, too, before they get on back and start filling the folks back home with their hair-raising experiences in the three years they spent at the Fort.

A newspaper reporter from the States is along on the trip, notebook in hand, asking innumerable questions. The colony is a magnet that pulls all kinds of people from all over the world—the screwy New Deal experiment that backfired on the skeptics and became a success. Of course, there was a war to help and 75,000 soldiers at Fort Richardson to feed.

The road is still winding and twisting, jumping through a pass in the low hills, and rolling over a high, yellow wooden bridge across the swift-running Eagle River. In May the land is covered with birch, all pure white bark and the hint of new leaves of the palest green. Low clouds ring the mountains, and a light drizzle falls gently. The air is clean and invigorating with the smell of spring. The windows of the coach are down.

There are lakes at every turn, all sizes and shapes—so many that all but a few are nameless to Slim, who has been making this run daily for two solid years. There are soft hills in the foreground and huge snow-draped mountains as a back drop. On clear days one can see Mt. McKinley, highest peak on the North American continent, but on this day clouds have formed a misty curtain.

Slim pulls in for a moment at the Eklutna School for native boys and girls and finds the place in the first stages of dismantling, for the school is about to move, bag and baggage, to closed Fort Raymond in Seward. The Army is moving out fast, and the Territory and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are trying desperately to grab everything while the

grabbing is good. It will be a race between the grabbers and the wilderness, and the latter is sure to win over a good part of the hundreds of millions of dollars the Army showered over the land during the war years.

The newspaper reporter looks about him at the white birches, the little blue lakes, and the brown and white mountains hanging overhead, and says that no words can possibly describe the beauty of Alaska. Sidney Laurence can paint it, but no man can say the words. And the truth is that in this fifth month of the year the land is drowning in beauty.

The driver interrupts to say that if the colonists could live on beauty, they could stop raising potatoes.

He halts the car on a high ridge and points to Mt. Susitna in the distance—the "sleeping woman"—and goes on to point out in graphic detail the striking similarity. He shows the round blob of hill that forms the head, the sharp, high-pointed peaks forming the breasts, the soft, curving mounds that go to make up the belly of the sleeper. And the GI's are sent off in a round of wild talk.

But the road stretches on, and the coach winds about and comes to the Knik River bridge, six steel spans joined to cross the Knik River, with its shallow waters and vast benches of silt that have come down from the glaciers. Slim slows down and points to the narrow stream paralleling the road where the first salmon of the season are swimming uneasily about. Some are floating on their backs, their white bellies shredded and rotting. This is the end of living, that others may live and go on out of the stream, down to the Knik River, down to Cook Inlet, and on out to the Pacific.

Now the road is passing fenced land and cattle and newly turned earth, dark and glistening from the rain. This is the beginning of the farming area, the land known throughout the world. There is a bad stretch of road where the Alaska Road Commission is widening the highway. Then comes

Palmer, the community center for the Matanuska farm project. There is a sprinkling of houses, the large creamery of the Matanuska Farmer's Cooperative, the Trading Post where there are wonderful milk shakes and food, the barber shop, and four liquor stores. The school looms up, pretty and white. There are a hundred soldiers up from Fort Richardson on three-day passes to help with the planting. They whistle at the girls who walk by in the rain, noses in the air.

The valley proper stretches on from here, cupped in by high mountains. Here is one of the finest agricultural climates in all of Alaska. Back toward Anchorage is the Chugach Range of mountains, mighty enough to keep off the rain clouds drowning the coast, yet not too high to ward off the warm winds from the Pacific. Up north, toward the Interior, are the giants of the Alaska Range, including Mt. McKinley, that act as a shield against the bitter sub-zero weather of the inland. With all this help from God and with a soil that is unusually fertile, the valley is justly famed for what has been done and for what can be done in the future.

There has always been a handful of trappers, miners, and farmers who knew the wonders of the region and homesteaded there. The Experimental Station of the University of Alaska has been in operation there since 1918. It was not merely by an odd stroke of luck that the New Dealers hit upon this spot to try an experiment in modern-day colonizing.

However, in May of 1935, when the first colonists arrived, the valley was still a rolling sea of timber with here and there a patch of cleared ground. They stepped from the train and looked doubtfully about. Women with babies in their arms, women with little children tugging at their coats, women with the strained, proud look of pregnancy stepped upon the wooden platform to join their men. Frightened children with little peaked caps and little peaked faces stepped around uncertainly, small suitcases banging at their knees. All of

them were led off to the tent village hastily prepared in Palmer. The white duck of the tents contrasted oddly with the homes they had known back in the States. Only the thin, black thumb of the stove pipe thrusting through the canvas offered a familiar sight.

The first job was the washing, for the children had come a long way, and the mothers had been frantic with the last washless haul north on the road from Seward. Then, with faces clean and hair slicked, they stepped outside the tents, framed themselves in the small opening, and obediently posed for the photographers clustering around with ready cameras.

Lots were drawn for the various sites, and the menfolk went out to the land and cleared the building sites. When a small patch of ground was stripped of its timber and brush, a D-4 tractor would pull the original tent home on skids across the rutted road to the spot selected. Later, more substantial homes were built, the lower parts of logs from the timber felled on the land, the upper of thin boards. As the colony progressed, these log homes were in turn to be replaced by strong frame homes, but even with the logs, many of the colonists had already made a long step forward to better living.

All this time the surveying, the planting of gardens, and the sowing of crops on the virgin loam were going on at top speed. Barns were built and roads pushed through the brush.

In the first two years, 120 babies were born—120 babies, 200 families—a record in any land.

The farmers had their troubles, and there were some who within a short time came to hate their forty or sixty or eighty acres and began to pine for the relief rolls of Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin from which they had been taken. These were the ones who abandoned the colony and were interviewed by every newspaper reporter on every boat

and train stop on their way back to former homes in the States. It was their stories that were seized upon, then enlarged, and printed a thousand times over so that in the minds of the country, the colony was written off as "another New Deal failure."

But those who stayed and those who filled in the ranks of the deserters were ignored and left to their own labor. While the ones who had abandoned the colony were interviewed and sought out, the others who stayed with the land sweated over clearing timber and planting crops and building houses. They teamed together and built the three-story community center that housed the first school, and they built the hospital, the trading post, the warehouse, dormitories, and power plant.

The Government had loaned them money repayable over a thirty-year period, and the colonists started in at once to wipe out the debt so they could stand upon the land and feel the quiet satisfaction of a man who rubs a bit of dirt between his thumb and forefinger and thinks to himself, "This is mine."

There was bitterness—bitterness in watching the first numbers evaporate until nearly half the original settlers had gone back to the States; bitterness in the sight of shirkers holding back, dodging their share of the community labor until a "work-to-eat" program threatened; bitterness in the bickerings among themselves, until finally after two years they organized into the Cooperating Association. They saw mistakes on every side, and not always their own, such as the failure of their first wheat crop because the wrong type of seed had been recommended. Late in 1939, four years after the founding, they were staggered by a crop loss that shook the colony to its very foundation.

The struggle was hard, bitter, relentless. Then, late in 1940, a dozen soldiers were dumped down in the birch out-

side of Anchorage, only forty-five miles away from Matanuska, and told to build a base for Army troops. The dozen became a thousand, and the thousand, ten thousand, and those in turn swelled to seventy thousand, and the success of the colony was assured. Everything that could be squeezed from the earth of the valley was poured into the maw of Fort Richardson.

The truck farmers worked at their lands and raised nine tons of potatoes to a single acre, and they worked on their cabbage rows and their lettuce. This is no startling success story, for it was all hard, sweating labor, and a knowledge of how to make the land produce after bitter experience. Yet in the lush days of 1944 on one acre of ground a man raised cabbage that sold to Fort Richardson for $17,000. But he was a fabulous exception.

The farmers secured milk cows, and because the cost of feed was prohibitive, they cleared the birch from the land for their own oat-and-pea hay, running three tons to the acre. They built themselves a creamery and reached down fifty miles into Anchorage to buy a milk route. Now large, white tank trucks rumble over the dirt road bearing the proud trademark, "Matanuska Maid."

The success was a real thing, and the news of it seeped out. The Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation became swamped with thousands of applications from new settlers wanting to come into the valley. This time there was no hodgepodge gathering of any and all who would like to abandon the relief rolls and assume the garb of farmer. There was careful choosing and screening of applicants, and the valley moved ahead another notch towards permanence.

There are 250 families in the valley. The population of the area, including the towns of Palmer and Wasilla, is about 2,250 people. There are 7,500 acres of land cleared, and the

colonists own 700 dairy cows, 600 hogs, 1,200 sheep, and 100 beef cattle.

They give themselves over chiefly to dairying, general farming, hog and poultry raising. Most of the farmers sell their products through their own cooperative, the Matanuska Valley Farmers Cooperating Association. The Association buys whole milk from the farmers, pasteurizes and bottles it, and sells it directly to the consumers in Anchorage. After ten years of experimentation, it is generally agreed that dairy farming is the best in the long run for the farmers of the valley, especially since the demand for milk and other dairy products far exceeds the supply.

The newspaper reporter wants to look around closely at the place, to get out and talk with some of the colonists. But knowing that this is the time for planting and the men are working from the first touch of light in the morning until their houses are but a black shape in the night, he decides it isn't wise to detain them in order to satisfy a burning curiosity. Not at this time nor in the harvests of September. So he kicks around there in the dirt roads of Palmer, with the water tower looming overhead, and wanders back of the school filled with chattering kids, and looks over to see three churches sitting at the ends of a triangle, two of them identical, the third a little larger.

The outside of the chapels is native birch, peeled, stained, and with dark cement for filler, and dark brown trim. One of the twin churches is the Lutheran Church, the other is the Catholic Chapel. There's a little side entrance to the main building and the reporter pushes the doorbell. A snuffy bird dog and a spaniel bound up to him, and then the door opens.

His mouth drops open in astonishment. This is the priest of the establishment. Young, scarcely thirty, with a light-brown sweater open at the neck, glasses, an intelligent face,

and a smile that is as warm and as welcoming as the door he holds open. He notices the reporter staring and smiles as he rubs at the black smear on his face. "You caught me in the middle of cleaning out the furnace. Sit down while I wash up a bit. How about some lunch?"

This is Father James Snead of Portland, Oregon, pastor of St. Michael's parish in Palmer. His church is here in this little log building, but his parish lines extend from Eklutna on one side to Talkeetna on the other to embrace a district about 200 miles in one direction and 250 in the other. Certainly he knows Matanuska. His Palmer parishioners, all thirty-five of them, are farmers in the valley. You want to get out and talk to some of the colonists? After lunch he'll take you around in his car.

He cooks the food, tends the fire, bakes bread, makes pies —and likes it. What's more, he runs a boardinghouse. Two young fellows, non-Catholics, high-school boys from out in the valley, are boarding with him. The board is fifty dollars a month, and with eggs a dollar and thirty cents a dozen, he doesn't make any money on the deal. "But a man would go crazy, living alone like this. I like to hear the sound of them opening and shutting doors. I get a kick out of shaking up a meal for them. Company. If I had to live alone, I'd never get beyond opening a can of beans."

A man like Father Snead is all good, and thoroughly sold on his work, and though he may not have more than fifty cents in his pocket and only eleven dollars coming in from next Sunday's collection, he's still happy. The people of the valley like him—and not only his own people.

He has a leaning toward classical music. A few years ago his parents down in Portland sent him an expensive radio-phonograph, and since then he has put every spare dollar he could into albums of classical music. Five hundred dollars, worth. His only other worldly habit is smoking a dozen pipes,

one at a time, and leaving them strewn about his living room-office. Every two weeks he has a three-hour class in musical appreciation, and more than forty people come and listen to the phonograph there in the heart of Alaska, while he interpolates, filling in the background that makes rich music richer.

The two get in his car, and he turns down the road that circles the valley. There is rolling ground, cleared land on every side, thick clumps of birch, and horses grazing in rich green pastures. They pass a barn whose foundation and whole lower floor is of logs, and the priest tells about some of the tough times of the early days.

Then the valley spreads out before them. Where the field is bare and the ground newly put to seed, he fills in the picture of the months to come when the earth will be carpeted in green and golden yellow. Field crops, pasture plants, vegetables, berries, and a couple of small greenhouses built against a log house. "Cucumbers and tomatoes. Somebody made money on them:"

There are fields that will bear oats, and he has the names of the different varieties at his finger's tip—Victory and Climax Gopher and Swedish Select. Barley? In this land where corn is one of the few things that won't grow, they put in a field of barley as substitute. And it is labeled with a name like Manchurian. They even have a variety of wheat —Siberian. The word may mean a lot to farmers, but to the reporter it is just an interesting name.

And the fields that will bear potatoes—they cover a good portion of the acreage in the valley. Father Snead mentions the potato holiday that comes late in September. Even the schools close down while the geometry teachers and the English teachers get out with the youngsters from the sixth grade and the learned ones from the high school to help get in the potatoes. They go modern and bring in potato diggers,

trick machines with an automatic sacker behind and seven kids riding the digger. The potatoes come bounding up a continuous belt right out of the ground, the kids reach in and drag out the undesirable weeds and dirt, and the potatoes go bouncing into a sack. Riding behind is a fellow who runs himself dizzy pulling off one bag, throwing the chute over to an empty one, hopping off with his loaded sack of potatoes, and climbing back to do the same thing all over again.

What kind of potatoes will Alaska have? White Bliss, Arctic Seedling, White Gold, Early Ohio, Green Mountain, and Katahdin are all grown here. Who ever thought there were so many kinds of potatoes when they all come home in the same paper sack from the grocery store?

If the farmer is just an average potato man, he will get 200 bushels from an acre. But if he really knows what he is doing, come planting time, he can get as much as 300 bushels. Most of the diseases, though not all, that go to make life miserable for potatoes in the States are missing, but a man can't just throw the tubers into the ground and let God take care of the rest.

When the newspaperman tires of looking at the ground given over to spuds, he can look at fields where new vegetables are starting to show, vegetables that will grow luxuriantly because of the ample moisture, the long days, and the amazing fertility of the soil. The average temperature for May is 47 degrees; June, 55.4; July, 58.2; August, 55.7; and September, 47.1. By mid-May there are seventeen hours of daylight; during June and July there is practically no darkness, and both the farmers and the growing crops work double shifts. With encouragement like that a man can raise radishes, leaf and head lettuce, early and late cabbage, cauliflower, parsnips, celery, rutabaga, carrots, beets, chard, and other edibles. And he rings the bell on currants and

gooseberries, red raspberries and strawberries. There is no end to this growing business.

The colonist has a fat Guernsey somewhere in his cleared land, if for no other reason than to keep the kids happy. If he's in the dairy business in a big way, he has a dozen Guernseys and Holsteins mixed in with a few Brown Swiss for variety. And there are always hogs somewhere in sight, for most of the colonists try to be as self-supporting as possible. Sheep, goats, rabbits, chickens, turkeys, geese, and ducks—the valley is a regular menagerie. The only animal on the decline is the horse. The onrush of tractors is making him almost as extinct as a prehistoric animal.

The car swings around the rusty tracks, branch line of the Alaska Railroad, and stops in Wasilla, a little town of 100 people, where the Father gets out to speak to one of his parishioners.

There is the inevitable good school with the flag folded limply in the still air, and all about are a sprinkling of modest homes that remind a man of one of the beach towns in Jersey. An old man in high boots is sitting on the wooden bench beside the general store, fondling an old bird dog. A huge malemute pup frisks up and down the wooden sidewalk. The old man notices his audience, and, pointing derisively at the malemute, cackles, "Them damn things ain't no good in this country any more. And this damn thing," he continues, scratching the bird dog's head, "he's just too damn old."

The car is off again with Father Snead pointing out the different homes set back from the road, pointing to the men bent over in the fields, pointing out the wash hanging on the lines. The sun has broken through the clouds, and the women have rushed out with the wash. "It's a hard life, but it's a good life."

The University of Alaska has an agricultural experiment

station right in the heart of the valley. Approaching it, watching the hundreds of sheep scamper up the rolling hillside, looking at the numerous fields all planted with a variety of crops, the visitor thinks back to the farms along Maryland's Eastern Shore. Given good land and good men to work it, space and distance are of no account. A good farmer in Matanuska would be a good farmer in Ohio; a poor farmer in New York would be a failure in the valley.

At the Experimental Station—a half dozen buildings with barns and cottages and offices all jumbled together—they go looking for Stanley Balloun, the Superintendent, but he is off to Anchorage, and they find themselves talking to a quiet-voiced scientist, Jason Chamberlain, entomologist for the Station, an authority on bugs in the valley and in all of Alaska. Mrs. Chamberlain is there, too, working up labels for bugs, and a couple of the Chamberlain boys wander in with specimens in tin cans.

Chamberlain takes out his collection of classified pests of the valley, hundreds of tiny insects, flies, and beetles, attractively mounted, neat pins stuck through them and neater printed signs, almost microscopic, giving the name and the date on which they were captured in the valley. He shows dozens of large boxes of them, the work of years, with the quiet pride of a man who is happy to exhibit his findings to an appreciative audience.

The experimental station is the pilot plant for the entire valley. The results of the work carried on here are vital to the well-being and the future not only of the valley but also of all the farming areas in Alaska. Research and ever more research into every possible phase of agricultural development in the Territory is an absolute necessity.

The main station is 325 miles north, just outside of Fairbanks. In recent years four similar experimental stations have been discontinued. The annual appropriation for the

entire project is less than that devoted to the study of a single pest down in the States.

The station is left behind and the car is rolling along the road when a colonist walks down through the fields and Father Snead pulls to a stop. It is George Torgelson. He is short, sawed off, with a leathery skin, and has a tooth missing when he smiles broadly in greeting.

"Up to my neck in potatoes," he says while he waves toward a lower field. Two blond children come running across the furrows, then stop bashfully and dig circles in the dirt with the toes of their shoes as they edge closer. "Lots of potatoes going in this year. Army can't wait until they come up out of the ground. Got some soldiers helping with the planting. Look at them guys." He jams one hand deep in his overall pocket while motioning with the other to four soldiers slumped down in the sunlight. "First day out for them. Got them so tired they can't lift one foot in front of the other." He laughs shortly, shakes hands again, and is off over the hill. The two kids stand watching until a bend comes in the road and hides the car from view.

Back at the church, in the little room that serves as Father Snead's office and dining room and music hall, they sit around the desk littered with his pipes and he talks on about the valley.

The publicity given it in the prewar years was out of all proportion to its size. In reality, the valley is only a very small mountain-hampered piece of land capable of supporting only a limited number of families. But the nice combination of scenic beauty, mild climate, and amazingly fertile soil has made Matanuska the tail that wagged the dog—the dog being Alaska. It is one of the few agricultural areas in Alaska where there is a possibility of expanding markets.

The Matanuska Valley Farmers' Cooperating Association carries on the marketing, grading, and processing of the bulk

of the produce coming out of the valley. Besides the Anchorage Dairy, the Cooperating Association has a 1,500-ton concrete vegetable storage and the largest ice-cream plant in the Territory.

All reports from the Congressional Committee to the contrary notwithstanding, there has been a special section set aside by the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation people for servicemen, and they will be encouraged, cautiously, to look over the possibilities of making a living from Alaskan soil.

The biggest problem is that of markets. With the war and boom times, that was taken care of since Fort Richardson ate everything as fast as it came out of the ground. Anchorage is a good, solid market, but, as mentioned before, it is amazing how Alaskans have become accustomed to sending nearly 2,000 miles for their vegetables. Some people do not like Matanuska products, claiming they do not taste as good as those from the States, that the potatoes are watery and the berries without savour. But then, some people don't like Florida tomatoes, and Florida still sells a lot of them.

The towns along the Alaska railroad all the way up to Fairbanks make potential customers. A new wrinkle has been introduced recently, the shipment of milk and vegetables by air to points as far away as Nome on the Seward Peninsula. It is not a stunt and it is economically sound. Already the "Coop" is speaking of buying its own plane and hiring its own pilots to ship the stuff produced into every corner of the Territory.

The biggest drawback is that the produce comes gushing out like a torrent during the summer months, then fades entirely for the balance of the year. Anchorage merchants, forced to do business twelve months in the year, point out that they can order and get anything they want from Seattle at any time of the year. They can't build up good will with Seattle wholesale houses for eight months of the year, then

abruptly cut them off for the remaining four while they turn to Matanuska.

The answer is a quick-freeze system and a cold-storage house. Get an overabundance of vegetables, freeze them, and shove them into cold storage until the winter comes. The need for the cold-storage plant is immediate, but the "Coop" is staggering under the burden of its newly opened creamery, and it may be some time before it can tackle this new project.

The valley has some good points that are peculiar to it alone. The freedom from many of the pests that go to make life miserable for farmers in certain sections of the States ranks high on the credit side of Matanuska. And there are no rats—nothing more dangerous than black bears who occasionally wander in and pluck off a fat sheep or a sleepy cow. Then, there is fuel on every farm in the form of large stands of birch and spruce, and the largest coal mines in Alaska are only fifteen miles away at Jonesville.

Practically every farm is within a quarter of a mile of a good gravel road leading directly to the network that links up with Anchorage to the South and Fairbanks and the Alaska Highway to the North. There is plenty of gravel and sand for the construction of building foundations and roads. And for recreation, there are the mountains right at hand and the glaciers, rivers, creeks, and lakes, filled with all kinds of fish and wild life.

Stated like that, it all sounds very wonderful, like a new kind of a paradise, but that is only one side of the picture. The problem of markets is a serious one, and a man can soon tire of growing wonderful radishes if there is no one around to eat them. Farming in Matanuska, as in every other part of the world, entails an endless amount of honest effort and backbreaking labor. There is modern machinery on every side, but the farmer still has to get up before the sun has

come across the horizon and must stay with the work until the night is full upon him. Only people with an infinite capacity for hard work can become farmers and stay farmers. And don't forget the warning of the Congressional Committee—that further opportunities for homesteading in Matanuska are limited and by no means as ample as reports indicate.

Still there must be some outlet for dreamers. If you want to indulge in a half-hour of armchair pioneering, spread out the map of Alaska. There are no less than 365,481,000 acres of land in the Territory. Of these the Government has placed out of bounds 140,000,000 acres, labeling them as coal reserves, oil reserves, National Parks, Army havens, and Navy havens.

Any of the acres left over after the Government has marked off its own is subject to homestead settlement—provided the land is adaptable to agricultural use (which marks more than 100,000,000 acres), is not mineral or saline in character, not occupied for the purpose of trade or business, not within the incorporated limits of a town or village, and not already homesteaded.

If you are twenty-one years of age or the head of a family, if you are a citizen of the United States or have made a Declaration of Intention, the land is yours—up to 160 acres. Any unfortunates who are already burdened with more than 160 acres of land in the United States (aside from other homesteads) are barred from filing.

Sex is no barrier. Single women or married women who are not dependent on their husbands for a living are invited, even urged, to come in and start clearing the wilderness. But there is another wise law that prohibits a married woman who is dependent on her husband for support from filing simultaneously with her husband. This prevents any ambitious young couple from garnering 320 acres at one blow.

A million such entries would put all the land under private ownership, and the Department of the Interior would be stripped of all functions but supplying guides for the National Parks.

However, acquiring the 160 acres is not accomplished merely by walking into the land offices at Anchorage, Fairbanks, or Nome and signing one's name to a piece of paper and paying a fee of sixteen dollars. There is the matter of settlement. Once you choose your spot of Alaskan wilderness, your work is just begun. Homesteading is hard work. It is digging out roots, blasting stumps, leveling the ground, erecting cabins, building sheds, worrying over barns and livestock and poultry, aching with pain and tossing for a few worrisome minutes at night before falling off into exhausted slumber. It is unbelievably hard and lonesome work and holds out an elusive reward. If a man cannot enter into it with a sense of humor, ready to smile at himself or to laugh, he will go quietly mad or else will fold his tent one night and fade back into the dim reaches of the States with a shattered, embittered remnant of a dream. There are thousands who drug themselves with dreams of freedom in a log cabin in an Alaska forest. Of those thousands only a handful persevere to make the dream a reality.

If you have 125,000,000 acres to mull over in selecting your homestead, you are bound to come up with something suitable in the way of shape, water, drainage, the proper location of your cabin and so on. Then, too, you will have the fascination of walking over hundreds of square miles where no white man has ever before set foot—even in this day and age. You will be setting your foot, too, for you will be amazed at the lack of roads in the Territory.

With the boundary markers up on each corner of the homestead, you record a notice of location with the United States Commissioner of the district and start paying fees.

These are five dollars if the area applied for is less than eighty-one acres, or ten dollars if more; and, in addition, one dollar and fifty cents for every forty acres you are locating on. Whatever the amount, it is infinitesimal compared with the cost of getting to it from the States. If you want to bring along thirty or forty neighbors and take over one large piece of land in order to start a new sect in physical culture, there is no law against it. Neither is there any rebate for doing business in a wholesale way with the Land Office.

So in your dreams you make the long trip up, pick out the piece of land, mark it, file on it, and pay out a bit of money to the government man standing behind the counter. Then you really go to work. Within six months after going through the preliminary motions, you've got to have a home set up. Tents do not count, neither do lean-to's. It must be a bona fide residence, and you must do bona fide living in it for three years. At the end of the second year you must show at least ten of your 160 acres under cultivation; and at the end of the third year there must be at least twenty acres sprouting the good things of nature. This clearing of the land is generally the beginning of the separation of the sheep from the goats in the persons of the prospective settlers. A man who can survive the clearing of twenty acres of land has the earmarks of a pioneer.

The birch and spruce and cottonwoods are cut down with an axe and saw, generally during the winter. If a man has an eye to the future, he will saw the trees into suitable lengths for lumber or else cut them to fit into the stove. With the trees down and the cordwood stacked, the next step is to get the shallow-rooted stumps out of the ground and clear off the land to be cultivated. A bulldozer will make quick work of this, but its very strength will pull up a lot of good soil along with the roots. The experimental Farm recommends grazing the land for a year, at the end of which

the stumps can be pushed out without the loss of the valuable soil it took so many millions of years to deposit there in the first place. After a year of rotting, a bulldozer can clear an acre of stumps in one or two hours.

Around Matanuska you can rent a 'dozer from the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation, but it will be unfortunate if you happen to be clearing land in an area where no 'dozers are available. If you wish to bring along your own equipment and some choice livestock, you are entitled to lower transportation costs from the steamship companies.

The Government is not rigid in its requirements of residence, and in many cases will bend over backward in order to encourage the settler. For instance, during each year of residence, a settler is allowed to absent himself for not more than two periods aggregating not more than five months. In other words, during the spring and summer, with the crops in and God left to take care of them, a settler can run on down to the nearest cannery and earn some hard cash to throw into the coffeepot back in the cabin. Or he can dash into the nearest big town and take a job chauffeuring a truck for some construction outfit. The problem is to be near a cannery or close to a construction job.

These leaves of absence are not taken casually. Every move is checked by the Land Office. You get permission, you check out and you check in. In case of a jolt of hard luck, such as crop failure, sickness, or the imminent threat of starvation, the Land Office will even allow a settler to take a full year's leave of absence in order to get himself straightened out and ready to start over again.

The one thing the Land Office is strict about is the requirement that ten acres be ready for cultivation by the end of the second year of residence and twenty by the end of the third. Before you start in they will point out the expense and labor necessary to clear standing timber from

the land, but they'll also emphasize, market or no market for your produce, that you've got to have twenty acres under cultivation by the end of that third year. No excuses.

That is why it is best to do your dreaming in an armchair. That is why, before selling out the drugstore back in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, it's so very wise for a man to take a trip up to Alaska, look over the available land, and decide for himself whether to pull his family from its roots in Lebanon and strike out in the new life, or to compromise by buying one acre down in Bucks County where he can hop in his car and see a show in Philadelphia at any time.

It is nice to dream, but it is good, too, to stand with your two legs deep in a windfall on some of this timbered land, wondering how in heaven's name a man is ever going to clear off the jumbled heap of logs and fallen trees and living trees that have lived and died unhindered on this land for a million years. It is not impossible, and it has been done, but take a look at it first.

Veterans of any of our many wars are given a boost toward speedy ownership of their homesteads. With them age is no barrier, so if a boy of eighteen wants to "get a new start in life," the land is waiting. Credit for terms of service in the armed forces, not exceeding two years, can be applied toward the three years' residence. In other words, the average veteran can come into the land, do his clearing, build his home, and have the title within one year—provided at the end of that time he still has the strength left to sign his name.

The vast acres of Alaska are open and waiting for anyone who can stop dreaming long enough, but if you have had no previous experience in farming, don't decide to experiment with your luck in the Matanuska Valley. The Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation has control of that area, and it will look coldly upon you for it has had too many sad experiences with pseudo farmers.

# JUNE

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau ..... .. | 54.2 | New York ... ...... .. | 69.0 |
| Anchorage .. ... ..... | 53.3 | St. Paul .................. | 67.2 |
| Fairbanks ........... | 58.2 | Spokane ..... ......... | 62.3 |

June brings whole shiploads with screaming banners, like SEATTLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GOOD-WILL TOUR, LOS ANGELES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, YOUNG STUDENTS OF BRAZIL, and ships bulging with school teachers. Even into Nome the ships come with banners flying, for the ice has gone out at last, and the whole town is down at the waterfront with wide eyes, wondering what delights will be swinging out of the deep, yawning holds.

The congressmen and senators descend upon the land, for Alaska from late May until early September is fair game for anybody from the States. They come and take a look, a long drink, then return to the safety of the States where anything can be said about the Territory, and the Associated Press is sure to broadcast the utterance as gospel truth.

With hardly an exception the weather is pleasant throughout the land, and in the Interior the heat has not yet come to stir the mosquitoes from their hiding places. From Barrow, where oil drills are pounding up and down, to Ketchikan, where the canneries are clanking, the Territory is in a frenzy of work. The weather and the long hours of daylight are precious and to be used with care.

In only one section of the great land do the winds still blow, cold rains lash out, fogs swirl in terrifying blankets. The dreary landscape changes from white to dull brown and in the valleys to a halfhearted green. Spring never comes to the Aleutians.

CHAPTER SIX

# JUNE IN THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS

PITY the wealthy Aleuts.

Two hundred years ago there were over 25,000 of the stocky, fat-faced little fellows. Then the Russians stumbled on them in their journeys over from Siberia and brought culture, civilization, and the light of learning. They showed the Aleuts, with their jet-black eyes and their glossy black hair, how to band together in large parties of 400 or 500 for a little teamwork in hunting down the sea otter and the fur seal. When the Aleuts chuckled a bit and said the new methods were very good, but they liked the old way best, the Russians shot 3,000 of them at one crack, took all the young girls as hostages, and sent the hunting parties out again. After forty years of persuasion, the Aleuts were a very docile group, but there were only 2,000 of the original group of 25,000 left to be persuaded. Modern bandits have much to learn from the Russians of 200 years ago.

Then followed another fifty years of peace and prosperity of a sort for the Aleuts, enough food for them to eat and enough water to drink, until the Americans took over in 1867. No one seemed to worry much about the Aleuts, and they continued to die peacefully and quietly, not bothering anyone. A few government schools were set up on the seven islands where the Aleuts remained, but there weren't many left to worry about. Some of them had drawn away in a wide circle from the original islands, drifting over the mainland along the northern shore of the Alaska Peninsula. Others kept an eye on the seal herds on the Pribilofs. In 1939 the Coast Guard estimated there were only 400 Aleuts in the whole of the chain stretching west from Dutch Harbor.

There weren't more than twenty-five white men in the same area, which is a fairly good indication of what the region has to offer. Anytime a Caucasian is content to allow the original dark-skinned owners of land to stay unmolested, then the land is worth very little. Those who had picked their way out through the chain were mostly interested in fox farming. Then the Government stepped in and converted quite a few of the islands into bird preserves, the fox-farm leases were withdrawn—since foxes and nesting birds do not mix—and the Aleuts saw even fewer white men.

In the prewar years, the Coast Guard was charged with keeping an eye on the entire chain. At least twice each year a trim white craft slipped out between the high mountain walls of Dutch Harbor, turned a sharp bow to the west, and started the long, wearisome routine of calling upon the isolated communities at Umnak, Atka, and far out to Attu, only 380 miles from the Kamchatka Peninsula in Siberia. It would slip into whatever harbors were available for its small draught, seek out the one or two white inhabitants, deliver the mail, pick up the orders for Sears Roebuck, pull teeth and tonsils, carry the sick back to the hospital at Dutch Harbor, and the criminals back to justice.

The captain would send landing parties ashore on some of the uninhabited islands, find evidence of Japanese occupations, report to Washington, and forget about it. It was always an exciting trip and always a bit dangerous, since there were only two good harbors west of Dutch Harbor, and the available charts of the region were weird concoctions.

The Japs jumped in on the Aleuts in June of 1942 and took prisoner the forty-five natives living on Attu. While they were about it, they took over Kiska, one of the two good harbors. Under imminent threat of destruction, a Coast Guard cutter hustled down the chain, took off what Aleuts it could find, and brought them down to southeastern Alaska

for safekeeping. They were dumped at an abandoned camp near Ketchikan and told to make themselves happy. Some of those Aleuts, in good years, had been making as much as $7,000 or $8,000 from their fox trapping. Now they tried to adjust themselves to the strange forests of southeastern Alaska, and to answer the questions of newspaper reporters. In April of 1945 they were moved back to the chain, but six of them elected to stay behind, rather pleased with life as they found it around Ketchikan. Some of these six may have wondered why they ever stayed out in the islands at all.

The Aleutian chain is a collection of fourteen large and fifty small islands, plus an uncounted number of rocks and islets, all of them cold and barren, extending in a looping swing westward from the tip of the Alaska Peninsula 1,000 miles out to Attu. Standing on the black sands of the beach at Massacre Bay in Attu, a man can look out over murky, rolling waters toward Russian Kamchatka, less than 400 miles away. A journey in an army transport from 'Frisco or Seattle or Cold Bay all the way out to Attu gives a better idea of just how far the chain of islands does extend.

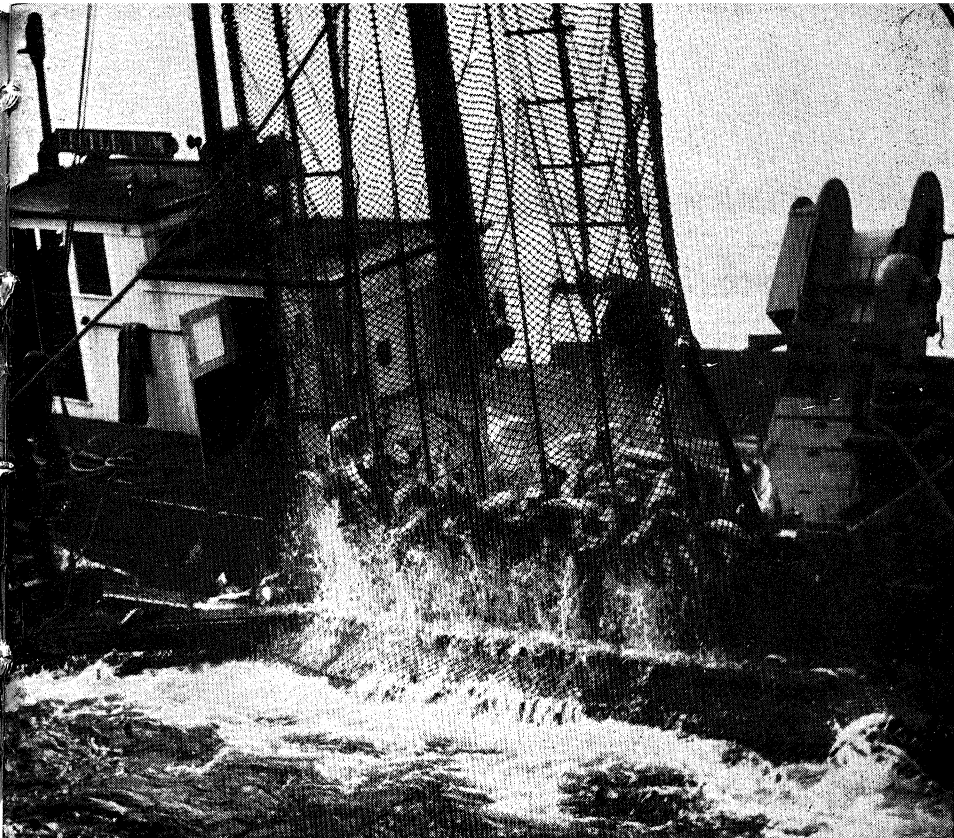
Nobody minds the distance; distance never hurt anyone. It is just that the islands are blighted. Once a piece of land or a chain of islands gets God's back turned on it, the land begins to wither. These Aleutians are mainly of volcanic origin, and one can stand on many an island and see a cone of mountain thrust up in the sky with a plume of feathery smoke whipping in from the summit. Just for a reminder, a soldier can be knocked off his feet by an earthquake when he least expects it.

The islands themselves may be a paradise for sea birds, and the waters a haven for millions of all kinds of fish, but they are neither a paradise nor a haven for human beings forced to live on them against their will. There is no telling how many thousand GI's have been marooned out in the

*Laidlaw*

Seattle, gateway to Alaska and the largest city in the Pacific Northwest, has a tight monopoly on the Alaska trade. Beautiful surroundings, strategic placement, and keen business acumen mark the city "at the end of the line."

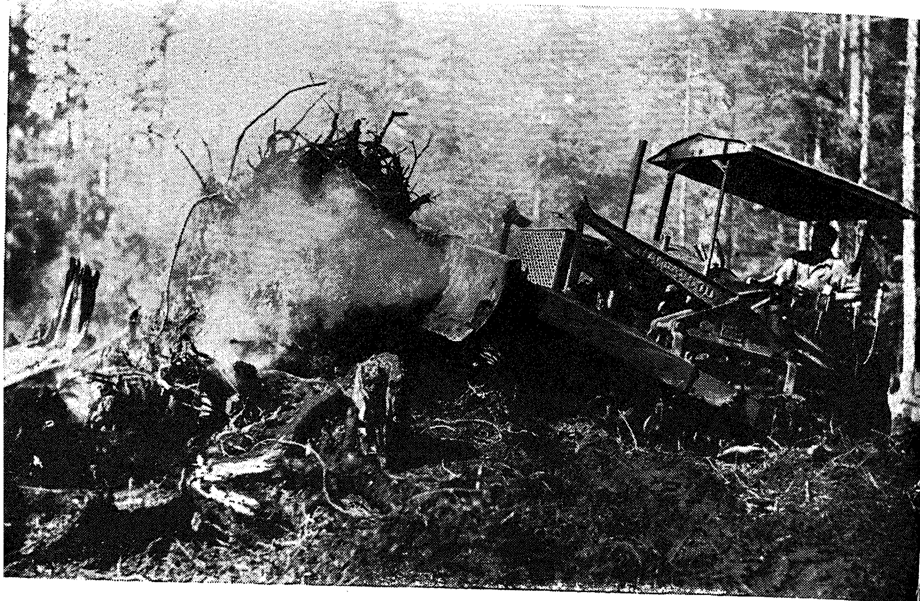
*Ordway's Photo Service*



*Ordway's Photo Service*

Sitka with its island-studded harbor. It was from this town that Baranof, the shirt salesman from Siberia, ruled the Russian-American empire. Here, in 1867, the American troops took possession for the United States.

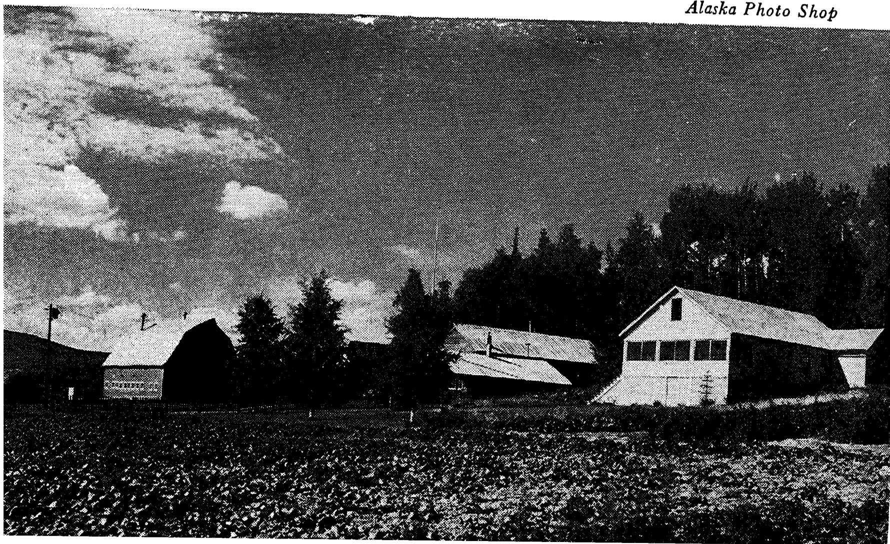
Brailing salmon from a trap near Ketchikan. The 400 traps in Alaska, each capable of snaring 20,000 salmon at a time, bring gray hairs to the conservationists, guardians of the 40-million-dollar industry.

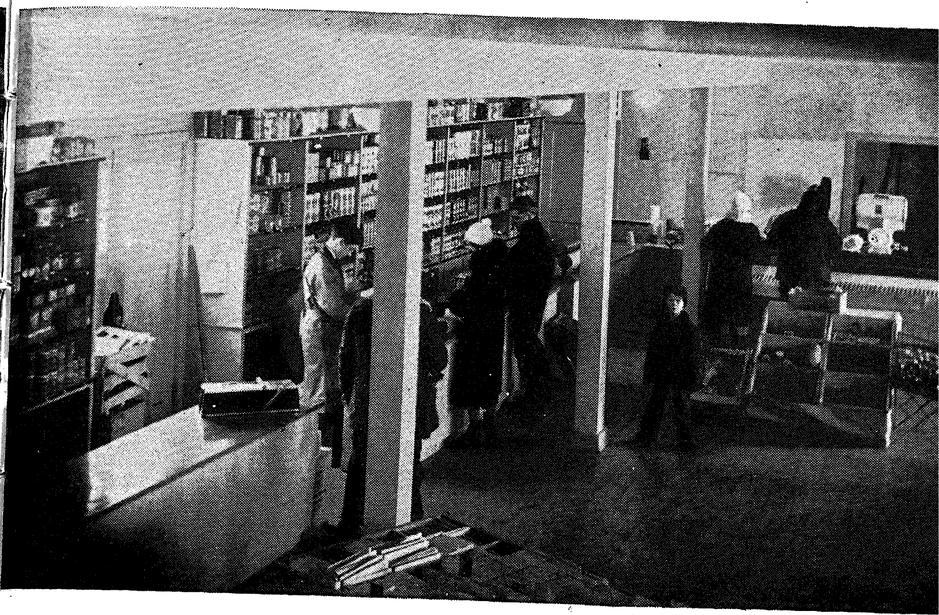


Clearing land in the Kenai. The use of bulldozers has lessened the toil of modern-day pioneers, but a sharp axe and a strong back are still necessary equipment for homesteaders.

Goal of many newcomers to the Territory is the ownership of a farm such as this one outside Fairbanks.

*Alaska Photo Shop*





*Ordway's Photo Service*

The trading post at Palmer in the Matanuska Valley features home-grown vegetables in the summer, Seattle canned goods in the winter

End of the day in the Matanuska Valley.

*Ordway's Photo Service*

*Official U. S. Navy Photograph*

*Official U. S. Navy Photograph*

The first Seabee Base on Attu, "bloody hole of the Aleutians." This westernmost of the "unhappy islands" is only an hour's flight by fast fighter plane from Russian Siberia.

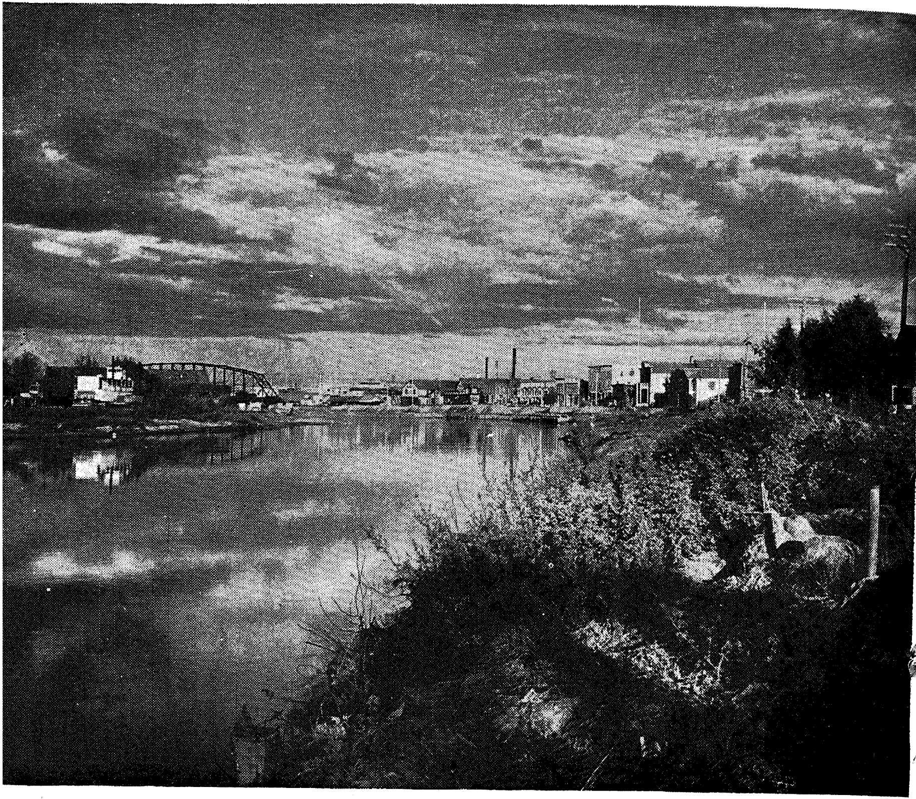
Adak, the most formidable military base in the Aleutians. President Roosevelt sailed into Kuluk Bay, pictured here, hoped that these weather-beaten servicemen would return some day as settlers.

*Press Association, Inc.*

*Ordway's Photo Service*

Booming Anchorage, largest town in Alaska, site of the Alaska Railroad repair shops, steppingstone for planes flying to the Orient, and supply center for Fort Richardson, biggest Army post in the Territory.

Shell Simmons' Alaska Coastal Airlines, shown loading in Juneau for a flight to Sitka, is typical of the "small outfits" who have a firm grip on a good part of the Territory's tremendously important air transportation.



*Ewing Galloway*

*Ordway's Photo Service*

Fairbanks, Queen City of the North, cut in two by the smooth, swift-running Chena Slough. The twin black smokestacks of the Northern Commercial Company play an important part in the long winter's struggle the town wages with subzero temperatures.

Stripping the frozen topsoil so that dredges can get down to gold-bearing gravel. Man-made erosion and the ugly gravel spawning of dredges are the trade-marks of multimillion dollar corporations seeking gold in Alaska.

*Wide World*

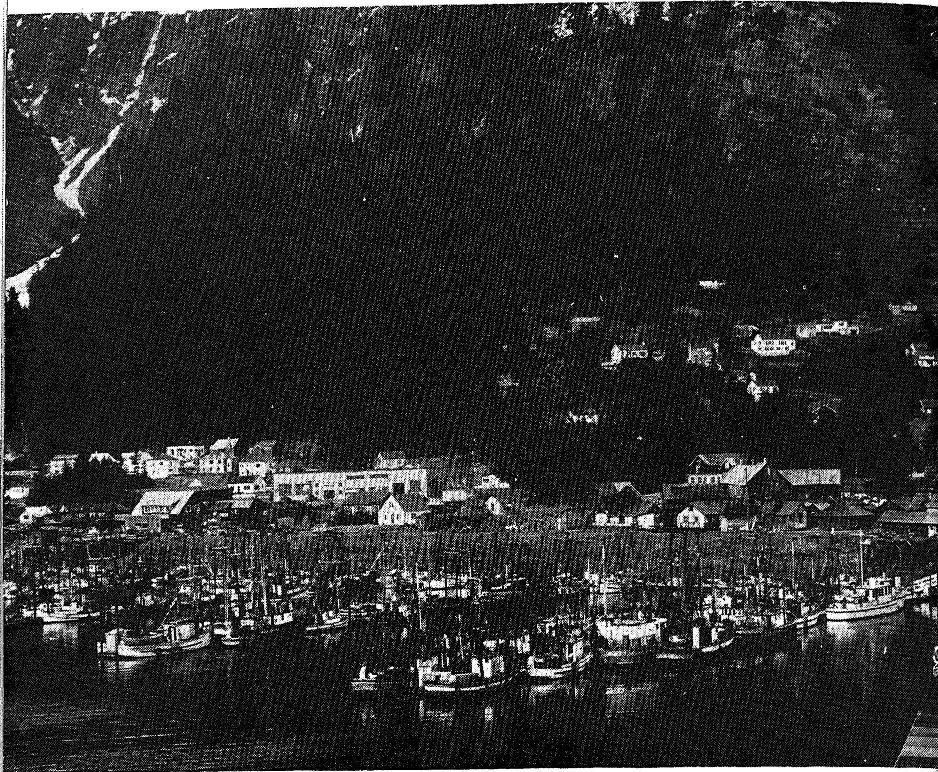
The Alaska Highway at its best near Fort St. John in British Columbia. From here on the dusty road narrows, starts winding and twisting 1,600 miles up to Fairbanks in Alaska.

The "Hungry Highway" in the mountains of Yukon Territory. Here, gasoline, good tires, and thick sandwiches come first on a traveler's list of necessities. *Wide World*

PRINCIPAL

ALASKA ROAD SYSTEM

SCALE



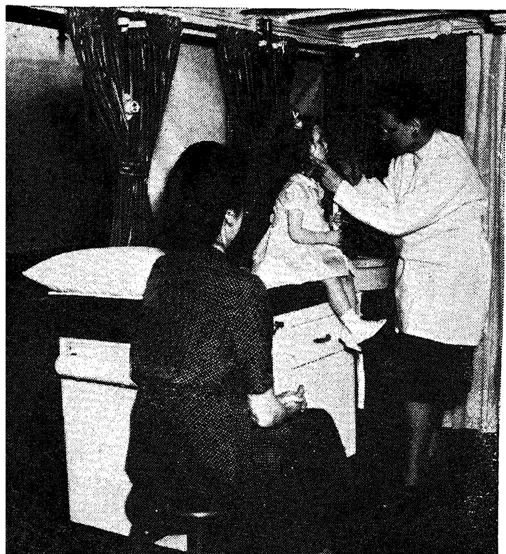
*Ordway's Photo Service*

The small boat harbor and fishing fleet in Juneau, capital city of Alaska. The new "suburban" residential district, center left, is squeezed between overhanging Mount Juneau and the crowding waters of Gastineau Channel.

*Ordway's Photo Service*

Downtown Juneau where the streets are paved with gold – waste rock from the Alaska Juneau Mine. On the left is the Baranof, largest hotel in Alaska, with its thick carpets, smart shops, and "No Parking" signs.

*Ewing Galloway*



*Above:* Eskimo family in a temporary hunting shelter. Most ravaged by tuberculosis of all the natives in Alaska, the Eskimos were healthier before the coming of the white men. *Left:* Dr. N. Berneta Black examining a patient aboard Alaska's floating clinic, the motorship *Hi Gene,* which brings medical attention to remote villages in the island-studded Panhandle.

Aleutians, and there is no telling how many millions of words have been written home about the constant rain, the wind, the williwaws, and fog that turn life for them into a rain-washed cavern with always a touch of madness. There may be a few men who really enjoy their stay out in the islands, but they keep the good news to themselves. The rest hate it.

The Army was justified, of course, in inflicting the torture of garrisoning the islands. As soon as the Japs grabbed the good harbor at Kiska, the Army turned around and went ashore at Adak. From then on the land back to Dutch Harbor that had known only 400 Aleuts and a few dozen white men was flooded in a sea of khaki. There was hardly a rock or an islet that didn't get an ack-ack gun position or a listening post. At every post, without exception, the weather was foul.

Even though Gen. Smedley D. Butler of Marine Corps and Police Department fame once said that Alaska should be abandoned in case of war, the Japanese, and later our own Government, had other ideas. The Japs knew that anyone holding the good harbors of the chain could effectively close the Bering Sea and dominate the northern portion of the Pacific Ocean, the southern coast of Alaska, the western coast of British Columbia, and be a constant menace to such cities as Seattle, Vancouver, and even San Francisco. The Japs were balked at Dutch Harbor, but their seizure of Attu and Kiska wasn't done by chance. The shore line of most of the remainder of the chain is abrupt and forbidding in a region of great fog.

The Japs' bombing of Dutch Harbor and their landing on Attu and Kiska threw a scare into American military circles that won't be fully admitted until years from now. If the Alaska Peninsula or Bristol Bay had been gathered in by the little yellow men, they would have had an excellent chance to strike eastward at still more important points in the Territory. If they had taken a toe hold in Kodiak, the

Japs would have been able to cut off important food supplies of salmon, halibut, and cod, and would have made an even greater mess of the shipping between Alaska and the States than they did with their perpetual submarine menace. Only those who went through the nightmare of squeezing an endless parade of oversized ships through the shark teeth of the Inside Passage north from Seattle, know how neatly the Japs bottlenecked Alaskan traffic. And the figures have not yet been released on the number of ships that played tag with the rocks and lost.

All the outlets of the Alaska Railroad would have been in constant danger if the Japs had been in control of Kodiak, since in the eyes of the military men an invasion of the railway at Seward or the Richardson Highway at Valdez would be comparatively easy for an enemy working out of that island.

The importance of the chain, unpleasant though it may be for human habitation, has been so forcibly impressed upon us that it is a safe bet American soldiers will be sweating out terms of enlistment upon the rocks of Attu and Adak and Unalaska for a hundred years to come. And a hundred years from now, soldiers and sailors will still be looking up at the leaden sky and asking, "How can any place be so rotten?" And every voyage of every troopship for a hundred years to come will be the same as those taken during the early days when the Army first discovered the chain, for the Aleutians will never change.

No one has ever had an idea of water, or ever grasped the idea of the blue stretches on the maps, until he has hung over the rail of a converted salmon packer with 1,500 GI's above, below and behind, pushing and elbowing in the confining quarters. There's one day of that, then two days, then two weeks, until he loses track of time. And always the water is heaving and tossing in mountainous waves and sudden

storms that take hold of the men and the ship and reduce them to utter helplessness.

Names become places that stick in the mind. Names like Kodiak—a cold vista of mountains in the distance across the heaving seas, or Dutch Harbor, where the ship stops for four days. Then the crowded ship turns about, picks its way through the narrow entrance walled in bare rock and starts dropping down the interminable length of the chain.

The islands are a desolate, straggling procession of rock and sand and brown-bedded grasses seen dimly through the rain clouds to the left. The ship bucks and tosses in the shallow rolling waters of the Bering Sea, and always within sight is one of the orphaned islands. They sit low in the water, a myriad of gaunt, volcano-spewed monstrosities that only a war could make desirable.

There is one cruel island that looms closer than the others as the narrow-waisted ship heads into shore, and the sudden chilling thought comes, "This is the place. This is it." The engines deep below decks miss a beat, then another, a bell rings, and there is an almost imperceptible slowing of the propeller. Far off to one side is a long line of tents with smoke curling lazily from stovepipes sticking in the air. A shovel nudges into the face of a cliff and a big six-by-six fights its way along the beach. The rain comes up again and the men stand shivering, looking out toward the shore where a couple of lights are blinking.

There is good weather and bad weather and changeable weather. And people, no matter where they live, will always lie a little about it. Floridans will lie a little in order to excuse the blistering heat of September; real-estate men from Seattle will never mention the sodden rains; Southern California will keep its fog well hidden like ghosts in the closet. But up here in the Aleutians no one will bother to lie or excuse or hide. Summer or winter, the weather is beyond

apology. There is no one season, no one month that does not bear its evil. If one brand of weather stops, another takes up the dance. Mostly they rotate in fifteen-minute intervals of rain, snow, hail, and fog. The pilot of the ship, who has been here a dozen times and hates each trip more than the preceding one, grins sourly and says in answer to the question, "Spring never comes to the Aleutians. Never."

For a technical explanation of the bad weather, there's the fact that the temperatures are moderate, and fairly uniform, averaging around thirty-three degrees in winter and fifty degrees in summer, and never going as low as zero. The cold winds from Siberia and the ocean currents flowing down from the Bering Sea meet the warm air masses and ocean currents moving eastward across the Pacific, and their interaction produces winds of high velocity, dense fog, rain, mist, and snow. The famed Aleutian williwaw is a sheet of wind and rain that moves across a body of water like a dirty towel hanging straight down.

Reduced to reality, this means a soldier huddling down over a jackhammer on the face of a cliff, wind tearing and clawing at his face and red hands, rain slashing at intervals and changing quickly to snow before he can get his head pulled deeper into the woolen muffler about his throat. It means a ball of fog that comes rolling ominously across the bay, enveloping the water and touching the cliff, touching the jackhammer until he stands alone in a small space, deep in the fog. The only real things are the jackhammer and his feet and hands and the woolen muffler about his neck.

Even scientists offer half-hearted apologies for the necessity of sending human beings into the area. In a report by the Smithsonian Institution, those learned gentlemen say:

Perhaps nowhere were military operations in the war carried on under greater difficulties than in the Aleutians. When the war

began there were no adequate surveys of many of the islands. Detailed geographic and topographic information was lacking, especially for the western part of the chain, and none of the latter was fortified. Uncharted reefs and shoals, strong currents and tide rips, the paucity of good harbors, and the unpredictable weather all combined to make navigation dangerous and difficult.

Aviators, having to contend with sudden storms and almost continuous fog, faced even greater hazards.

Under these handicaps it required a high degree of courage, determination, and resourcefulness on the part of our men to defeat and drive out a strong and well-entrenched enemy force and to secure the islands against further attacks.

Notice that the author throws in a plug for the Navy for getting GI's out to the islands through uncharted waters; he throws a bunch of posies to the aviators feeling their way in and out of fog-bound fields; he gives a nod to the infantry for cleaning up Attu; but the engineers who stayed behind and fought a war all by themselves against the snow and wind, the rain and the fog, for two or three years, he tosses off with "secure the island outposts against further attack."

An engineer is a fancy name for a pfc who is boss of a jackhammer on the face of a cliff. If he stays out in the chain long enough, he will tend to look like an Aleut—short, squat, sawed-off. He will be bent over and scrunched down, fighting the air hose and fighting the wind that's sucking about his legs, and one gets the idea that he is a very small, very queer-looking fellow. His green canvas parka, pulled in with a drawskin at the waist, doesn't look very different from the shirt-like garment the old-time Aleut used to pull over his head and tie around his belly.

A lot of the Aleuts in the time of the Russians used to go barefoot the year around, except when hunting in tough places like rocky beaches where they might pull on heavy

waterproof boots made from the esophagus of the sea lion and sea lion's flippers. One thing a GI never did in the Aleutians was to go barefoot. He wore a heavy pair of brogans and over them pulled a flopping pair of galoshes. But an Aleut's feet, bare or wrapped around in the esophagus of a sea lion, couldn't have looked any funnier than a GI moving around clumsily in rubber galoshes.

The Aleuts wore a kind of hunting helmet made from a flat piece of wood, bent over and sewed at the back. The GI wore a khaki-colored woolen helmet that pulled down over the ears and had a little peak sticking out front to cover his nose. It looked silly, and a man would die before he had his picture taken in one and sent to the folks back home. But what could he wear? His tin helmet is saved for the day the President drops in during the rain, and the men line up in the mournful drizzle and look very military with the water dripping off their chins; and his seven-dollar barracks hat is saved like a hidden treasure against the day when he will step off the boat and kiss the ground at Seattle.

There was one piece of clothing in which the Aleuts didn't quite line up with the GI's. There is a duck floating around the Aleutians which is not a duck at all, but a tufted puffin. The bill is pushed back and creased as though some GI in a lonely moment had started to carve his initials in it. This bird with the funny face played an important part in the dress of the old-time Aleuts. The skin is very tough, and because the feathers are a warm shade of brown, the former owners of the land favored them heavily in the making of parkas.

The Aleuts soaked the skins in stale urine, their substitute for soap, until all the oil was removed, and then they were washed and hung up to dry. An Aleut woman going to make a sociable call on a neighbor, would drag out a bit of puffin skin and chew on it energetically between para-

graphs of gossip. Forty-five skins were needed for the making of a parka, and a lot of chewing went into the skins.

The GI's used soap for anything that needed cleaning. Real soap. They never had to get out and scrape puffin skins in order to get a warm garment draped about them, for the supply sergeant, if a bit careless in sizes, was not niggardly in quantity. However, the outfit did have to be kept clean, and there a problem presented itself. Generally, a man was too tired after a day's work to stagger down to the washhouses to rub heavy woolens up and down on a washboard. Besides, big business had moved into the island. Some genius—there is always a genius—had built an electric washing machine out of spare parts from a D-8 cat, a Bucyrus Erie Shovel, an old air compressor, and a discarded garbage can. Faced with such masterminds, who could help surrendering the dirty wash for a price?

The Aleuts had a house called a barabara, partly underground and covered with sod. The roof was made of poles or planks covered with a layer of dry grass and over that was sod. An Aleut coming out of his barabara looked like a gopher coming out of a hole. Your engineer had a Pacific hut, and in the early days when it wasn't quite certain whether the Japs would be satisfied with Kiska and Attu, the huts were sunk in holes in the ground, and the parts that stuck up were covered by bags of sand that started to rot and give way, and the sand dribbled out in frozen streams.

The Pacific hut never received the publicity given the Quonset, but for a lot of soldiers' money, it is by far the better of the two. A Quonset hut is made of corrugated sheet-steel, and is full of windows and drafty doors, and it sweats and freezes, sweats and freezes. A Pacific hut is made of smooth sheets of thin steel, backed with some composition like masonite which comes in handy sections easily bolted together. There is only one door at the front and one at the

back, and on either side of the doors, two small windows set flush in the wall. Mostly you wouldn't know the windows were there, for they have sheets of thin wood over them—permanent blackout curtains. The hut doesn't sweat and it doesn't freeze, and a small coal stove set smack in the middle gives out a nice heat and keeps the hut very comfortable in the most miserable kind of weather. Eight men can sleep in the hut and make a nice living of it; ten get a little crowded; sixteen is a stinking mess and is tolerated only till someone throws the extra men a wrench and a hammer and shows them the pile of snow-covered crates and tells them to get out and put up their own hut. Eight good men in four hours can build a shelter to stand until the island sinks beneath the sea.

Rummage around in old books, and you pull out the queerest angles on these Aleuts. About their choice of a village site, for instance. They had in mind always the need for a supply of fresh water, a beach where boats could be landed in rough weather, and a situation offering safety against surprise attack. So they located their barabaras in sand spits or narrow necks of land accessible to two bodies of water, in order that boats might be carried from one to the other in case of necessity.

Those Aleuts didn't know what an airplane was, back in the bloody days of the Russian traders; they didn't know that a man not only has to look out over the tumbling waters for a possible convoy of hostile cruisers and aircraft carriers coming in over the gray horizon, but he has to be ready at any moment for a droning noise in the air and the sudden scream of a dive and the flashing black of a plane.

It was all right for the Aleut to stick his barabara out on a spit of sand, but your GI went into the gullies, and shoved his hut deep under an overhanging bank, or he went into the hills and scooped out a deep place and hid his hut under

the shaggy grass of the tundra. If there had been any trees, he would have hidden under them.

The Japs left the picture in May of 1943. After that there came a lot of people who knew how to spend money and how to take advantage of Congress when Congress was willing to say "yes" to anything provided they got on with the war. These fellows rubbed their hands and said, "Men, here we are going to build a base the like of which has never before been seen in the North Pacific."

The steam shovels come in and the bulldozers and the LeTourneau Carryalls, and a couple thousand tons of dynamite. The geniuses point a finger at an 800-foot hill of black, volcanic sand and ancient glaciated rock, and they say, "Pull that mountain down. Level it to the ground." Then they light a cigarette. They point another finger at a lake that has lain undisturbed for a few hundred thousand years, and they bellow, "Fill up that lake. Build thirty warehouses on it in the next six months."

So the pfc's of the engineers take a stone mountain and cut off its nose overhanging the sea, and they ram through a six-lane highway to run from the thirty warehouses down to the twelve brand-new docks thrown out upon the waters. The men from Washington see the ships shaking and quivering uneasily while tied to the docks, they speak a bit with God, and then they announce in grand tones, "Build us a breakwater a half mile out into the bay. Never mind the depth of the water, never mind the cost. Build it." The breakwater costs several million dollars, and once it sinks mysteriously under the sea, but the sweating engineers behind the wheels of twelve-ton-trucks persevere, and the breakwater is completed. Then these same lowly Joes flatten out acres and acres of volcanic sands, and they build a city of Pacific huts that will shelter 50,000 men in just one corner of the island alone.

The Aleuts, when they sat down to eat, dined on seals and sea lions, sea otters, and an occasional whale. They had a taste for codfish and halibut and smoked salmon. For a bit of hard meat they'd turn to cormorants, ducks, geese, loons, ptarmigans, and even a protesting gull. For dessert they'd have clams and mussels and a delightful mess made from the bright yellow eggs of the spiny sea urchin. All this, of course, before the Government and the two fur-trading companies made regular deliveries of canned peaches and pancake flour.

One thing the GI out in the chain received was plenty of good, wholesome food. There were a few times when it was not too plentiful, as when a storm was kicking up in the open waterway of Amchitka that passed for a harbor, and the Liberty ship with the grub had to pull off, then go away altogether, and the island was reduced to bombings and K rations. But mostly the food was there in quantity, especially after things went along on a big scale, and there were mess halls capable of handling 600 men at one sitting.

The boys from the Aleutians constitute one group that the various chambers of commerce throughout Alaska can cross off their worry list. There is no great danger of a mad rush of immigration from the men who spent time out at Umnak and Adak, Amchitka, Attu, and Shemya. It is even doubtful if the Aleutian chain figures at all in the planning of the Alaska Development Board. Those gentlemen have too many other problems on their minds concerning the rest of the highly vocal parts of Alaska to give much thought to a region that at one time harbored so few Aleuts, very few of them interested in voting.

Since the war several huge bases have come into being, some or all of them permanent, far out on the chain. No doubt some ambitious persons will dream up a fresh meat market close by the bases, and it may be, with an assured market and the right prices, that they will succeed. But luck

will have to be on their side, and they will have to "keep their hands deep in God's pocket." Nothing else will lick the Aleutians.

Grasses and sedges grow luxuriantly, and the nutritious grasses are well liked by domestic animals. However, the high humidity and the short growing season prevent the curing of hay for winter use and necessitate the importation of feed all the way from the States. But the cost is prohibitive. Before the war and the arrival of the tide of khaki, there was a sheep ranch on Umnak Island with about 15,000 head, the flock annually yielding about 120,000 pounds of wool. Umnak is within seventy-five miles of the base at Dutch Harbor, a market that can gobble up anything the area has to offer.

There are some who will try to get in on the lucrative fox-trapping business the Aleuts have developed. It sounds simple to turn loose a couple pair of foxes on a deserted island, sit back for a few years while they multiply as only foxes can, and then reap a rich harvest. Simple—but there were only two dozen white men who tried it before the war. There must be a reason.

# JULY

## AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 56.6 | New York | 74.3 |
| Anchorage | 57.0 | St. Paul | 72.0 |
| Fairbanks | 60.0 | Spokane | 69.5 |

July comes in on the sputtering roar of the hydraulic "strippers" tearing into the gold-bearing gravel of the Interior and the brrrr of drills questing for oil on the Arctic slope. Grimy men dig into the coal beds at the Jonesville mine; Matanuska housewives bend over vegetable patches putting out the last of the head lettuce; pick-up trucks race around the streets of Fairbanks and bounce over the bridge out the Steese Highway to the placer gold-mining region beyond Engineer Creek.

The short fishing season in Bristol Bay is in full swing, and the shallow waters are covered with ships of all sizes, from little dories to huge floating canneries.

The office workers in Juneau and Ketchikan are "burying their grandmothers," hurrying out the road to soak in the sun that is even stronger around Auke Lake and Ward's Cove. The air is filled with the drone of Sunday flyers in little pontoon-equipped planes; and the big commercial D-C3's come bouncing down on the runways.

Big dogs stretch sleepily across the sidewalks of Juneau, causing shoppers to wheel baby carriages out into the streets to avoid the obstructions.

In Anchorage the sound of the carpenters' hammers is a steady note in the still, warm air. Soldiers from the Fort drive out to Lake Spenard to look at the rippling waters, marveling at the midnight-without-darkness. The office of the marriage-license clerk is busy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Hallelujah Town:

## JULY IN ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE is the place—and no mistake! They've dug in here, thrown the roof to the sky, and decided by God and by Harry that Anchorage, Alaska, is in this world to stay.

There is a breathlessness about the place, an air of wonder mixed with impatience to get along with the day. It strikes a person from the very first moment he steps out of the decrepit Alaska Railroad coach or first glimpses the town from the plane as it banks to come down at Elmendorff Field. Here in the middle of a wilderness is a city, a living, exciting city.

The newcomer catches the breathlessness in the swerve of the taxi whipping along the streets. He breathes it in on Fourth Avenue, concreted and unusually wide—as wide as Figueroa in Los Angeles. He moves along with it in the big new buses brought in over the Alaska Highway—buses for Matanuska, Fairbanks, Valdez and Fort Richardson.

The liquor stores are much in evidence along the main drag, alongside of restaurants, drugstores, photo shops, theatres, dress shops, and electric shops. This main drag is one long street, stretching as far as the eye can see, pointing down toward the Palmer Highway at one end and coming to an abrupt stop over the mud and sandbanks of Knik Arm at the other. It is concreted most of the way, but where the concrete gives place to black sand and crushed rock, the transition is so smooth that it is scarcely noticed.

Everything that is alive is jammed along Fourth Avenue or close to it, the hotels, the dirty yellow Federal Building, the dingy City Hall, the places for food, and the places for drink, the offices of the airlines, and the night clubs.

Set back on Fifth Avenue for quiet and peace is the imposing group of buildings given over to the school children. The town is desperately trying to get business to stretch out a bit and take in Fifth Avenue along with Fourth, arguing that Anchorage is no longer a "one-street town." When a businessman does take the bit into his teeth and sets up shop on Fifth there is great acclaim, and the newspaper ungrudgingly devotes editorial space to applauding the man's courage and foresight. But the banks are building on Fourth Avenue, new apartments are going up, Cap Lathrop is spending more of his Alaska-made fortune to erect a new theatre block, and the city is putting up another addition to its already good school buildings.

There is plenty of room for expansion. Anchorage is not like the southeastern coast towns of Alaska, hemmed in, groaning under a weight of mountains; she has wide, flat space as far as the eye can see. Far in the distance, yet close enough to feel their beauty, are the white-capped jagged teeth of the Chugach Mountains. Out beyond, along the wide, flat road over which the trucks and buses are rumbling, is storied Matanuska, and the whole Interior of Alaska.

The town is shoving out at an unbelievable rate. Back in 1939 there were about 3,500 who called Anchorage home, all clustered around the railroad shops on Knik Arm of Cook Inlet. Today there are more than 9,000 in the city, and thousands more are strewn about the outskirts, waiting for the city limits to stretch out and take them into the body politic.

Money is being made and spent, for Anchorage has the places—the Lido Gardens, the Cheechako Cafe, the Five-fifteen Club, and a host of lesser lights where a man can be

pleasantly parted from his money in less time than it takes to lift a drink and smile at a pretty woman.

This is roaring Anchorage, but it is still Alaska where liquor comes hard on the heels of water for popular consumption. There are sixty-two liquor establishments for 9,000 people, so said the earnest minister of the gospel who marveled alternately at the lusty, screaming spirit of the new town with its wonderful harvest of lost souls and the terrible evils he could see lurking behind the chrome and plate-glass windows.

The pace is fast and the prices are high, and whether breakfast is sixty cents or a dollar and a half, the waitress still expects a fat tip under the plate. Two construction stiffs, newly returned from bases in the Interior, stand upon the sidewalk calmly breaking shiny new $100 bills into less cumbersome fifties. The jeweler is a very busy man, but if the wrist watch is left overnight he will be glad to snap in a new crystal for only two dollars—two dollars for a twenty-five cent crystal, but this is Alaska, this is Anchorage.

There is an Irish girl, Jane McCullough, an employee of the United States Engineering Department out at the base. She is in her middle twenties and just back from a two-month vacation trip to her home in Seattle. Her story follows:

I came up of my own free will, and I guess I like the country. The work isn't strange—I used to do the same for the Engineers in Seattle. Nor is the country strange. It's like the country around home with a lot of rough spots added.

When I first came to Anchorage I'd have gone out on the first boat or plane if there was any space available. I hated the place, hated it as I'd never hated any other town I'd ever seen. It was so raw and muddy, and felt as though it were going to explode any minute.

But that was only for the first three months. Then I began to like it a little bit, though I still hated the merchants.

They wouldn't sell me any shoes because I was a stranger, and I was walking around practically barefoot.

There was lots of night life. A single girl in Anchorage, with all those construction men in town and all the officers and men out at the fort, had things very much her own way. You'd work in the office all day, and then it seemed you just fell into a pattern where you'd be going out every night in the week. Going out meant stopping in this place for a drink and the next place for a sandwich and somewhere else for a drink. It got rather wearing. Now that I'm back here again, I'm going to save my strength. Life's too short for the hectic life I led that first year.

Stay in Anchorage? I don't know. Maybe if I were married and my husband wanted to stay and open a business—like a shoe store, or a good restaurant or a hardware store or something like that—then maybe I'd stay. But I'd want him to buy us a certain house here in Anchorage first. If I could only have that house, I'd be willing to stay forever. I won't tell you where it is for then you might run out and buy it yourself, but it's one of these places where you can sit in a big chair in the living room and watch the sun fall down into Cook Inlet at night. Then everything is quiet and peaceful until the moon comes up and the waves start dancing. It's wonderful, and I love it. I guess I didn't fall in love with Alaska as much as I did with a piece of scenery.

Jane McCullough knows a score of men from Fort Richardson, both enlisted men and officers. And she has her own ideas about the magic hold the Territory claims to have on men who have seen service in Alaska during the war years.

Let a man get a couple of drinks in him, and you'll get more truth out of him than from any questionnaire the Army ever devised. Hardly one soldier in 100 who has seen Alaska intends to make it his home. And those boys who were stuck out in the Aleutian chain hate the country so much they

won't come back here if they give them a piece of land gold-plated and crusted with diamonds.

Of course, it isn't fair to judge the country by the Aleutians, but that's all those boys know, and that's all they want to know. Most of the men who served here on the mainland have families back in the States. They're just dying to get back there. Once they do, few of them will be coming back to Alaska. They talk about it a lot, but you know how these young fellows are. So says Jane McCullough.

Late at night in the cool dusk of a July evening, Fourth Avenue is loaded with these GI's from the Fort, hanging around the sidewalks outside the gyp joints, escorting a giggling group of Jane McCulloughs, whipping around in a convoy of nondescript pleasure cars. Others in khaki are working in the pressrooms of the daily newspaper making money in their spare time. A couple more are dressing up a darkened department-store window. In the glare of automobile headlights one can see a group in green fatigue overalls hanging on to the raw edges of a new building, banging on shingles, dropping a plumb line. One good-looking redhead is dishing up sundaes in an ice-cream parlor, his regulation tie sticking out in nice contrast to the white apron he wears.

These are the kinds of guys who wait for a discharge and make plans for the new world at peace, all at the same time. These are the kinds who are scratching the backs of their heads, wondering if Alaska, especially Anchorage, isn't the place where they want to throw out their hooks and settle down.

There are some bad spots—roughly dressed women weaving uncertainly down the avenue, looking for one last drink before they collapse. These are the hard-oppressed, the downtrodden, though just what oppresses them or what treads on them no one seems to know. They are not ladies of the night,

but simply thirsty women getting out to mingle with thirsty men. The ladies of the night are not poorly clothed but go by in diamonds and the finest the dress shops of Anchorage. have to offer. They sit idly in cafes, legs swinging, delicately chewing on three-dollar-and-fifty-cent T-bone steaks while they wait for some swain to come along and pick up the check.

But one can ignore this part of the picture. A man can walk alone down the length of Fourth Avenue toward the blue and black clouds high above Knik Arm. He can stand hidden in shadows and look out at a world swimming in beauty—endless stretches of calm waters, the smooth flat slick of the mud benches, the dark blue and green and black of distant mountains beyond the waters. Even the clouds move up and down restlessly, black and white underneath the soaring expanse of cobalt left by the setting sun. A man might wonder if he has found the spot that so enthralled Jane McCullough, the girl who fell in love with a house where one could see the sun go down and the moon rise from the waters. This is a time when a man's heart goes out to a country, and Jane McCullough is not alone in having fallen in love with a piece of scenery.

Anchorage is charging ahead like a steamer plunging down the Yukon. But what keeps the fire going under the boilers? Just beyond the town was a vast area of birch and brush that was transformed almost overnight into a military camp of 75,000 men, Fort Richardson, giant of all Alaska's military camps. Building up the Fort and Elmendorff Field with it during the early days of the war sent Anchorage into a frenzy of activity. Those were the days when setting up housekeeping in garages became commonplace, when shacks were seized upon eagerly, when tar paper, cardboard, a few sticks of lumber, and a score of nails could be made into a shelter for two or four or six. Every boat, every train, and

every plane came in crowded with war workers, and for every arrival a new shack was brought into being.

The money was wonderful, the climate wasn't too bad, and as long as there were food and drink at hand, a man could endure—or a woman, for the women flocked in by the hundreds to do their bit wherever the Army could shove in a flat board for a typewriter. Even the steamship company cooperated. For a time, during the darkest days of Japanese threats from the Aleutians, it was feared the boom town might be forever cut off by enemy submarines lurking in the shipping lanes, but the steamship officials saw to it that the beer and liquor kept coming in a never-ending stream.

The war is now history, and contracts have been terminated, but a large force of civilians will still be needed out at the base. A great number of homesick soldiers will be stationed at the Fort, and money will be rattling loosely in khaki pockets. Besides, there were 3,500 in Anchorage long before the war when Fort Richardson was just a name hidden in some musty file back in Washington, D. C.

Anchorage is the hub of the western part of the Territory, and its most ardent boosters say it is the nerve center of Alaska. From here radiate lines of communication and transportation that reach the most distant corners of the Territory. Anchorage rivals Chicago in strategic placement. There are railroad tracks, bus lines, airfields, and in the summer, small boats that chug down the waters of Cook Inlet. On two sides of the town are the tracks of the Alaska Railroad. First and foremost, Anchorage is a railroad town.

The Department of the Interior's Alaska Railroad, the only long railroad in Alaska, drops a short finger 114 miles south of Anchorage down to Seward and Whittier in the Kenai Peninsula. Northward from the town, it snakes through Matanuska, Curry, Mt. McKinley National Park, and Nenana, and 350 miles beyond into Fairbanks. The

rusty tracks gave birth to Anchorage, for without them there would never have been a city on the shores of Knik Arm.

Many can claim a hand in the conception of Anchorage, even as far back as the first President Roosevelt, and the beginnings of a Pacific Fleet. Without the fleet there would have been no need for coal, and without the need for coal back in 1914, Congress would not have appropriated $35,000,-000 for the construction of a railroad from an ice-free port into the interior of Alaska, with the avowed purpose of tapping the Matanuska coal fields.

On June 14 of that year, George Colwell, a government engineer, was put ashore from the steamer *Northwestern* at a spot near the present Ship Creek Bridge. He took a deep breath and looked about at a complete wilderness. There was one lonesome log cabin in sight, no other habitation. Eighty-four men followed him from the ship to the spot that would one day be Anchorage and fanned out in six surveying parties to hack the first line through the wilderness into the Interior.

They left a base at Ship Creek, and as word of the new railroad spread through Alaska and the States, a few men began to drift to it, looking for work. Construction stiffs were to call Anchorage home for the next thirty years. The few swelled into hundreds and the hundreds into thousands, until on July 2, 1915, a year after the first surveying party came ashore, there were 1,000 white tents pitched on Ship Creek on Knik Arm at the head of Cook Inlet.

A government representative, auctioneer for the day, climbed upon a wooden platform and prepared to dole out the lots of the proposed townsite to be erected on the high bluff overlooking the railroad yards. The railroad and the grand prospects to follow its coming were the subjects of a roseate, hour-long speech. Three thousand people stood in front of the government man, looking over his shoulder toward the white tent bearing the sign, "Mountain Pool

Room," and every last one had the same purpose, to be "in" at the beginning of what was hoped would be the Pittsburgh of Alaska. One hundred thousand dollars' worth of lots were sold the first day, and with the setting of the sun, the city of Anchorage was an accomplished fact. It was eight years before the same could be said of the railroad.

By that time the battlewagons of the fleet had discovered the use of oil for their steam turbines, and the picture had dimmed a bit. By that time, too, the Department of the Interior had thrown iron safeguards around the coal deposits, and the campaign to "save Alaska for our grandchildren" was in full swing. Thirty years have passed, and the grandchildren are on the scene waiting to claim their profits, but the Department of the Interior has thrown away the calendar and is still sitting on the coal lands, looking dreamily into the atomic age. But in 1915, coal was king, and Anchorage was caught up in the crowd of worshipers.

Until Anchorage was strong enough to move about on its own feet, the railroad ate for it, drank for it, thought for it, and even tried to solve its moral problems. Lot owners were forbidden to take part in the dispensing of liquor, under penalty of confiscation. The railroad went even farther and prohibited the use of any lot for immoral purposes. The officials grimly set aside a few lots on the far edge of the tract for the exclusive use of the ladies of the night.

There were other problems of a pressing nature, too, such as that mentioned in a stinging rebuke sent out by the townsite manager in the form of an official circular in 1917:

"The attention of the occupants of the new cottages in blocks 16, 17, and 21, is called to the sanitary regulations of the townsite that require a flyproof metal can be provided for the reception of all garbage. The practise of throwing garbage in heaps must be discontinued."

Twenty-seven years later the problem was still acute. This

plaint appeared in the editorial columns of the Anchorage *Daily Times:* "Will someone please tell me, confidentially, just when the ashman makes his rounds?"

But ashes were of little importance. The main thing was that the railroad did go through to Fairbanks, with President Harding doing the honors in the summer of 1923. Anchorage was made official headquarters of the railroad, and roundhouses and repair shops were thrown up, providing permanent work for a permanent population. In the middle of the Second World War, with freight highballing over the line at an amazing rate, a three-story concrete depot and general office building was constructed on the plain below the townsite of Anchorage. The building is solid and enduring and in style resembles the newer additions made to the Ossining prison in New York State.

Everything about the railroad has progressed, except the railroad itself. The bulk of its equipment is identical with that lined up for proud inspection by President Harding. The hard plush seats are the same, the antiquated washrooms, the odd shapes and contours of the ceilings. The only additions are the grime on the windows and the jagged tears in the green plush of the seats.

The train crews are as good and as courteous as any to be found in the States, but the roadbed still remains bumpy, the service unpredictable. In the summer an attempt is made to meet the tourist ships at Seward, but with the summer finished, the road settles back comfortably to a once-a-week schedule between Fairbanks and Anchorage.

The price of a railroad ticket from Anchorage to Fairbanks is twenty-four dollars and fifty cents. The joker comes in the form of a compulsory overnight stop at Curry, with compulsory sleeping and eating. This overnight stop with dinner, bed, and breakfast is advertised at $5 minimum, but few people have been able to keep the cost below $9. The

train leaves Anchorage on specified days at 2:30 P.M. and arrives in Fairbanks the following day at 4:40 P.M. But every morning in the week, the Alaska Airlines has a DC-3 taking off from Elmendorff Field that reaches Fairbanks in an hour and fifty-five minutes, as opposed to the twenty-six hours by railroad. The fare is $34.50, tax included. No stops, no wasted time, no bumpy roadbed.

It costs fourteen cents a gallon to ship motor fuel from Seward, 470 miles along the railroad, into Fairbanks. Oil costing nine cents a gallon in Seward is laid down in Fairbanks at a cost of twenty-three cents. The Interstate Commerce Commission has promised to investigate freight rates on the Alaska Railroad, but so far nothing has been done about it.

Prior to the war and the building of bridges, truckers beginning to haul heavy stuff over the Richardson Highway into Fairbanks were making sizable inroads into the railroad's revenue, so the Department of the Interior placed a toll of $9.70 a ton on material going across on the ferry at Big Delta. The ferry, of course, was another Department project. Then the same people limited the tonnage to be carried by trucks using the ferry and succeeded in curbing competition still further.

During the war, the restrictions were waived since a government couldn't very well fight Japs with one hand and slow down ambitious trucking outfits with the other. Now that the war has ended, the truckers are waiting to see what the next move on the part of the railroad will be.

The general manager of the line has a very logical defense for any odd policy the railroad may adopt. The Government of the United States poured $73,000,000 into the rusty tracks, watched it go into the red consistently year after year, then had Congress brusquely tell the general manager to show an operating profit, and no back talk. He has had the profit

since 1938, but today it is hard to find an Alaskan who has a good word to say for the railroad. Even the tourists who look back at it with fond memories call up for reservations on the buses or planes.

Anchorage is aware of the conditions on the railroad, but even a booming courageous town like the "nerve center of Alaska" cannot successfully buck the Department of the Interior and the United States Congress. However, Anchorage did get a chuckle out of the situation when the train carrying a load of dignitaries from the Senate and House was derailed, and the visiting royalty were obliged to walk in the wilderness. The congressmen went back to Washington and recommended that Colonel Ohlson, then manager of the railroad, be allowed to use some of his carefully hoarded war profits for the improvement of the roadbed.

The railroad has been a great factor in opening up the mining areas of the Interior, and during the war it served the Army well in hustling supplies to the Interior. But Alaskans look to the airlines and hope for better days to come.

In one item the railroad is not niggardly, and that is the expensive booklet it sends out to prospective tourists. It is a beautiful piece of work, done up with scores of fine pictures, both in color and black and white—tantalizing rear-end shots of the trains, appealing shots of the hotel at Mt. McKinley, boats, mountains, farms, billy goats, and fish—pictures of everything but the antiquated wrecks making the creaking run between Anchorage and Fairbanks. The tourists love the booklet.

Diesel-powered freight trains are operating for the Army on the Whittier cutoff. There is talk that with the withdrawal of the Army, leaving behind some of its equipment, fast one-day runs will be made between Anchorage and Fairbanks, omitting the present overnight stop at Curry. For

Alaskans, filled to the neck with hollow promises, seeing is believing.

Luckily the railroad does not have a monopoly on travel in western Alaska. There are bus lines with shining new equipment. They have pushed north to Palmer, then swung sharply over the Glenn Highway 140 miles to cut into the Richardson Highway at the Glennallen Junction. There is bus service from Anchorage to Fairbanks, the terminus of the Alaska Highway. On paper, at least, Anchorage has a land link with the States.

There are planes at Anchorage that will go on charter anywhere, any hour of the day or night. Along Fourth Avenue, hiding between the liquor stores and taverns, are the attractive offices of the Alaska Airlines, the Pacific Northern Airlines, Northern Consolidated Airlines, Christensen's Air Service, and a half-dozen others too small to rate a gold-leaf sign in a plate-glass window. The city has two airports—Merrill Field, which it owns, lock, stock, and barrel, and the gigantic Elmendorff Field which was built by and for the military but is now gradually being used by civilian planes.

In July the sun can come down with irritating splendor, the dust kicks high along Fifth Avenue, and even citizens deeply in love with the town look for momentary escape. That's when the Scottish Rite steps in with its picnic out at Willow, advising prospective ticket buyers to "bring the family, pack a lunch, and sit around in the sun while the kids run themselves silly."

Lake Spenard is waiting for those who begin to wilt when the temperature soars beyond seventy degrees. There they can swim about in the cool water, listening to neighbors maintain loyally that it is every bit as warm as the water at Coney Island, Atlantic City, Miami Beach, or Santa Monica. Swimming in icy waters is always made more pleasant by villifying New Jersey.

The baseball league is in mid-season frenzy, and the town swarms to the ball park, which is enclosed in a high wooden fence advertising the merits of the Pioneer Laundry. Gaunt Tony Dimond, Federal Judge for the third Judicial District and for twelve years Alaska's lone watchdog in the House back in Washington, D.C., gets to as many games as a crowded court schedule will allow. Dimond is quick, energetic, and a source of inspiration to the amputees of this latest war. In Alaska a man with intelligence and a lot of drive doesn't need two sound legs in order to gather in the highest honors the people have to offer.

When all else fails, the people of Anchorage sit at home, ignore the heat, and listen to the local radio station, while they comment on the wonders of living in the finest city of the finest section of the world. Then they go to sleep and dream of the States.

It's a great town, and the sky's the limit, and a group of GI's, sniffing for a living, will ask what the town has to offer a man with a couple of thousand dollars burning in his pocket.

Take Ralph J. Grover, an accountant. He has a wonderful mop of silver hair, a cool eye, and a burning faith in Anchorage. It's been twenty-five years since he first stepped off the railroad down at the old depot and looked about at the raw town in 1921. Twenty-five years during which he's never set foot in the States. "What for? What have the States to offer that Anchorage hasn't?" This is the kind of faith that moved mountains. And Grover is bursting with ideas and following the ideas through into reality.

There is a new apartment house going up, a quarter of a million dollars' worth of building, and Grover is betting on its success. Anchorage, he says, was just ready to burst out before the war and take its place as the leading city of the Territory. The war helped a lot, but war or no war,

Anchorage would still have been great. Now with the curtain down on the conflict, Anchorage is going to hold all it has gained and gain still more.

(It is well to keep repeating the figure "9,000" over and over to yourself during the flood of enthusiasm, for it is easy to be carried away and start thinking of Anchorage in terms of a population of 900,000 or 9,000,000.)

The Matanuska Valley with its lusty growth is within the Anchorage orb, and the town is hanging on grimly. Anchorage is now cheering Matanuska and urging it to grow and expand and continue to be an astonishing success, for Anchorage handles the green stuff that pours out of the valley.

The men of the key city of western Alaska expect the tourist trade to boom and become the greatest thing ever to strike the Territory. They demand that the Government let loose its throttling grip on public lands so that a group of men with vision can move in and secure title to a section of land, build tourist lodges, ski runs, and skating rinks in the heart of the virgin wilderness.

They intend to offer the tourist a place in which to relax and thoroughly enjoy himself for a week, two weeks, a month. The Switzerland of America, that's what the tourists are going to discover in Alaska if these men of Anchorage have their way. If they have the cooperation of a sympathetic Government, great changes will take place in this postwar world of Alaska.

Let the RFC get behind these building programs, now that materials are becoming available, so that a man can do and not just dream. If an Alaskan is willing to throw $50,000 into the fulfillment of a dream, why shouldn't the Government throw in, not as a gift, but as a long-term loan, another $150,000 to carry the dreams through?

These are not starry-eyed men who do mysterious things

with little drawings on paper but hard-working men who have climbed to success in the Territory itself. They know what can be done if only the way is opened. For every man like Grover who can reach out and touch a finger to these dreams and make them realities, there are scores and hundreds who will benefit by jobs in the new small industries that must of necessity spring up to take care of, first, the construction workers, then the steady, ever-increasing flow of tourists.

And it is not to the tourist trade alone that the city looks for long life and continued expansion. Within the arc of Anchorage are some of the greatest low-grade ore deposits in Alaska. Willow Creek before the war employed hundreds of men, and plans are ready now, with men and materials available, to expand the holdings to an unheard-of extent.

There are huge placer lodes in the Kuskokwim Valley area, serviced by Anchorage, where the workings were held back by the war and have been only on a small tentative scale. Now these workings will turn into a beehive of activity, and the heartblood of the activity will flow from Anchorage.

The city itself has been caught napping by the tripling of its population within a period of six years. The sewage-disposal system and the telephone service are hopelessly outdated, and work must be started at once to bring them into line with the outward expansion of the town.

There are some people who are cautious, who shake their heads and wonder, "When is it all going to stop? What are these people going to do for money? What are all these new people going to live on when they get here?"

But voices like these are lost in the flood of optimism that has hit the town, and the believers in a postwar boom for Anchorage are ready with a bushel of figures for any who care to stop and listen. Twelve hundred and eighty-eight new homes are to be built within two years for the purpose of

housing government employees alone. The $300,000 addition to the school has already been found inadequate. The water system is creaking under its load and threatening to give way. The power system is heavily overloaded, and there is talk of rationing electricity.

The optimists like to tickle themselves with a series of questions, each one provoking a vision of a greater Anchorage.

What is going to happen when the postwar business is on us? Where will all these people stay? What about hotels and apartments? When the interior highway network is improved and made available to travelers, what will happen? When the Turnagain Arm crossing is built and the Kenai Peninsula is thrown open to automobiles, how will we handle the new business that develops from the motor traffic? When the airlines from Chicago and New York operate through here and bring business we never before had, what demands will be made upon Anchorage then?

And, brother, what business they will all bring! What business!

Yes, Anchorage is the place and no mistake. But if you should be tempted to come and take a look for yourself, don't forget the jeweler's two-dollar charge for a twenty-five-cent watch crystal because the price of everything else, from beans to baloney, is in direct proportion.

# AUGUST

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 55.4 | New York | 72.7 |
| Anchorage | 55.5 | St. Paul | 69.5 |
| Fairbanks | 55.0 | Spokane | 68.4 |

August finds the tourists coming in waves, and there is no section of the land that does not feel their tread. They show up in Ruby and Nenana, in Matanuska, Sitka, Nome, and Dutch Harbor, on the civilian bus boring down the Alaska Highway from Fairbanks to Whitehorse, and out in Goodnews Bay.

Fairbanks goes about its work in a sweltering heat wave that touches 95 degrees; the citizens of Ketchikan and Juneau spend their free hours battling salmon at the end of a light line; the miners of the Interior work until exhaustion overcomes them. Only in the Aleutians is the same, slow, measured existence continuing, the same hour of rising, the same endless rows of dark-green huts, the same mess halls, the same dark ridge of mountains seen through fog and rain.

Pilots look down at an Alaska marked with a variety of colors ranging from the white crown of Mount McKinley to the green and brown of the Interior and the jet black of the waters of the Panhandle. The little planes of the bush pilots are in the air continuously with scarcely a stop for refueling.

When a tourist ship docks or a train pulls into a station or a river boat claws its way to a rickety pier, shortly thereafter comes an angry snarl of motors, a rush of wheels or the smooth kiss of pontoons on water, and a plane is air-borne. Necks are craning, trying to take in all the wonders of this summertime Alaska. And at 5,000 feet the mosquitoes are discouraged and inactive.

CHAPTER EIGHT

# Twenty-two Days—to Three Hours:

## AUGUST ON THE AIRWAYS

THE AIRPLANE has turned life upside down in Alaska, squeezed the Territory into a vest-pocket atlas, and chased the colorful dog teams into the Territorial Museum. A pack of snarling puppies ran the mail between McGrath and Fairbanks in twenty-two days. Carl Ben Eielson climbed into an old Jenny and did the same run in three hours. Nowadays planes are so popular a mode of travel, among both natives and whites, that getting space on the crowded ships even in peacetime becomes a matter of great patience and persistence.

There is one old fellow who has all the facts of Alaska's air travel right at his finger tips. He is part of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce delegation fighting to get Alaskans to swing their support over to an exclusive Seattle-Alaska-Orient route in preference to the New York-Chicago route. The old boy is very unhappy, judging by the speeches he is making to the chambers of commerce throughout the Territory.

His unhappiness starts early in the morning, at five o'clock, when the room clerk knocks on the door of room number 3 at Bob Lindquist's Westward Hotel in Anchorage and he has to start thinking about catching the seven o'clock plane to Fairbanks and another speech at another luncheon. He stumbles around in the toney bathroom, and even while

lathering his tough old face, he must wonder how Bob managed to beg or borrow all the trick gadgets when he prettied up the hotel right in the middle of a war. The only mistake Lindquist made was in not building three times as big.

Outside on this dark August morning there is a cold drizzling rain and the speechmaker huddles inside his raincoat as he walks past the darkened stores and cocktail bars to the Cheechako Tavern, the only restaurant in town with an all-night eatery. There is a light at a lunch counter far in the rear of a long room, and the sleepy Seattleite pushes by a dozing cab driver, an empty, darkened bar, and past three green-covered card tables to the counter. Three other persons are sitting around munching morosely on eggs and toast and coffee, but the dark-haired waitress is as happy as the day is long, handing out smiles and banter for no extra charge. Even the chef is in good spirits and comes out between orders to chat with the customers. With these two exceptions, the nerve center of Alaska is in a very jumpy state early in the morning.

The dispirited emissary is back in the lobby of the Westward, his bags stacked and waiting. A dozen or more men and women are sitting around silently, for six o'clock in the morning is no time for hilarity. And the contrast between the muffled magnificence of the Westward's lobby and the boisterous activity of old-time river taverns highlighted in Alaskan fiction is amazing. Civilization presses on the town like a tight collar on a man's neck. At that hour of the morning there is no way of relieving the pressure. The taverns are closed.

A cab driver comes in, mumbling a word to the desk clerk who calls out unsteadily for the Juneau plane passengers. All but four of the silent ones rush to the swinging doors, the sound of the cab's motor rises sharply in the still air, headlights swing in a circle, and there is silence again.

The quiet is irritating, and the old man paces nervously up and down the thick carpet. One young fellow passes a cheery nonsensical remark to the Seattleite, but the wit is ignored. The silence is complete. There is a mixup in cabs, the time swings around, and when someone over the telephone talks of a cancellation of the flight, others begin to share the old man's nervousness. Finally the cab arrives, everyone shoves in, and the drive out to Elmendorff Field is made in deep silence. There is only the dull, dreary rain, the military police shack lit up in brilliant white light, and the quiet, sleeping Fort.

Out at the small passenger building of the Alaska Airlines the Juneau crowd is still sitting around glumly, for it is already twenty minutes past their departure time. Yesterday there was a cancellation of the flight because Juneau was smothered in clouds with a visibility of ten and a half feet, so now they are wondering if they will ever get south to Seattle. Through the smeared windows facing the concrete ramp the ground crews can be seen huddled under the wings of a DC-3, and a couple of boys are stuffing baggage into the compartment behind the pilot. Daylight is lost in the tumbling clouds, and the tips of the surrounding mountains are barely visible.

The weather is exceptionally bad for Anchorage, for Elmendorff Field claims to have a 2,000-foot ceiling ninety per cent of the time. Here the Government spent millions in the construction of an airbase that is ranked among the "Big Ten" of the world. The runways are lined with homeward-bound B-29's from Saipan and Japan.

People in the States do not fully realize the gigantic forward strides made by aviation in Alaska during the war. The Alaska Great Circle route to the Far East is actually shorter by hundreds of miles than any other existing route. There

are beacons lining the path, and a continuous flow of weather information. The problems of climatic hazards have been definitely licked. Commercial airlines, under charter to the Government, flew a staggering total of miles along the Aleutian Chain without a single accident.

The airports are not haphazard makeshifts clawed frantically out of the soil because of the crying needs of the war. They are giants — giants with 10,000-foot runways, and they have every safety device of modern aviation. LaGuardia Field, with its 6,000-foot runways, is ahead of these Alaska fields only in publicity.

For nearly a year the Civil Aeronautics Board deliberated the granting of authorizations to fly the Alaska Great Circle route before giving the nod to Northwest Airlines which will fly north from both Seattle and Chicago. Now Anchorage has an eager spoon in the gravy bowl of the Far Eastern trade.

The Army and Navy still fly a regular shuttle service from Elmendorff out along the Aleutian Chain. Several times daily the D-C's and B-24's take off from the concrete runway, heading south and west along the Aleutians. Men and mail and supplies are flown in constantly. The sight of the planes coming in with clock-like regularity, bringing mail from home in the States, is one of the greatest factors in keeping up the morale of the GI's still submerged in the fog- and wind-blighted islands.

Long lines stab out from Elmendorff Field like thin legs of a spider covering the Territory. They go down to Kodiak, Naknek, Bethel, McGrath, and Kotzebue. They point in straight lines to Fairbanks and Wiseman, on over to Cordova, to Valdez and Whitehorse. The cities and tiny clusters of cabins alone served by the Alaska Airlines read like a map index of the Territory. All the airlines, large and small, give regular, dependable, quick service and at prices that

keep the railroad and bus lines hard-pressed for passengers.

Anchorage is plane-happy. Not only does it crow to the high heavens about its superb flying weather, but it also boasts (with a lot of dissension from Fairbanks) that its skies are more heavily burdened with air traffic than any others under the American flag—and this with no hat-in-the-hand to LaGuardia Field. The newspaper editor can cite a host of facts and figures to show that Anchorage is more air-minded and has more planes per capita than any other city in America.

The squalling hubbub about the allocation of routes to the Orient was music to the ears of Anchorage since that city was certain to be the Alaska base of any plane sticking a silver nose westward toward Asia. Anchorage sat back smug and content, ignoring disappointed Fairbanks and bewildered Seattle, not caring how loud the argument rages since every one of the warriors before the CAA Advisory Board (Fairbanks excepted) wanted Elmendorff Field to be the final resting place before the mammoth planes shot off into the dim reaches of the Pacific and the vast spaces of the Orient.

In Anchorage alone there are 900 people working for the CAA, which is thoroughly entrenched in the town and has no intention of leaving. The safety factor over the rugged terrain has been handled remarkably well, and the CAA intends to keep it so. There have been a sprinkling of accidents among the private flyers. The war hid all but the whispers of several ghastly tragedies in military flying, but the record is still good. CAA hopes to avoid any repetition of the horror that struck Elmendorff late in 1945, when a big ship loaded with discharged soldiers from Adak in the Aleutians became a funeral pyre at the very edge of the field. Accurate weather plots are available, and radio guides and navigational aids have been installed in the most remote corners of the Territory—all of them under the thumb of the

Anchorage office. The big fellows flying the DC-3's and Electras have often been irritated by the officious young men who seem to come as standard equipment with CAA, but they have all profited by the Authority's help.

Typical of the growth of aviation is the consolidation of various little lines into workable big ones. The latest to emerge from the process is the Northern Consolidated Airways, built out of Ray Peterson's Flying Service and several other bush lines. Right now Pan American is uneasy king of the lot, with its line coming up from Seattle to Juneau into Fairbanks, with connecting service to Nome. On its heels are the lusty Alaska Airlines and the Pacific Northern Airlines, both of them clamoring for a chance to fly from their present terminus at Juneau south to Seattle.

But the big fellows have no absolute control over Alaska's flying and will not have for a long time to come. Alaska is still the land of the bush flyer. In the prewar years, when Pan American's Electras flying from Juneau up to Fairbanks were the only signs of large planes in the land, the country was thrilled daily by the exploits of the puddle jumpers flown by men who navigated by spitting out the windows and watching the spittle bounce from the mountain crags. The country still loves the little fellows, and their planes are parked on every flat strip of tundra and on every river and slough wherever four or more men are gathered together.

Pioneer of all Alaskan flying—bush, big time, army, navy, or budding giant—was Carl Ben Eielson, a young professor of biology who went up into the air over Fairbanks in 1921. Flying an old Jenny, he dipped over the high school where he had been earning a living, then proceeded to thrill the citizens with a series of maneuvers in the rattling plane.

Eielson was a hero from the day he first clambered into the plane. He paid for the jalopy in the first ten days of operation, his price for an eight-minute joy ride over the

city being fifty dollars. And the passengers were standing in lines, waiting to go up. In 1924 he tackled the first air mail in Alaska on a 372-mile route between Fairbanks and McGrath, cutting the schedule to three hours. Twenty-two days were required by dog teams. He proved it was possible to fly in temperatures of thirty or forty below zero—something the United States Army never quite believed until they sent their own men up for a bit of cold-weather flying in 1939.

He went exploring with Sir Hubert Wilkins in 1927, cracked up in the Polar regions and walked for thirteen days back to safety. The following year the pair tried again, and flew successfully from Point Barrow to Spitzbergen. Then he went on a rescue mission to an ice-bound fur ship caught in the floes off North Cape in Siberia. But he experienced one of those split seconds in flyers' lives when neither luck nor skill are of any avail and crashed headlong into the bleak rocks of East Cape.

The aeronautical-engineering building of the University of Alaska, just outside Fairbanks, is the Eielson Memorial Building.

Noel Wien was one of the early flyers in the Interior associated with Eielson in several commercial flying ventures. Today Wien and his two brothers have their own flying outfit, serving a vast mining region. Though Wien would rather point to his Boeing twin-engine transports and ignore the term "bush pilot," Alaskans are more interested in the little four-seat pontoon planes tugging at hitching ropes down on the swift-flowing Chena Slough, ready to fly anywhere, anytime.

Anchorage remembers Russell Merrill, a bush pilot who pioneered the airways out of Anchorage and for whom Merrill Field is named. And the townspeople of Juneau bless Shell Simmons, who for twelve years has been zooming his little ships high over the Channel, across the razor back of Douglas Island to Sitka and Hoonah. His specialty is taxiing

for miles on end along the smooth waters of the Inside Passage when fog drops a blanket around the mountain tops. His face is still scarred as the result of one taxiing expedition, when the plane flipped over on its back, and Shell dived several times under water until every one of his passengers was rescued.

Down in Ketchikan Bob Ellis cuts pretty patterns in the water while he shoots his float jobs across the bows of incoming steamers, causing a lot of neck straining and publicity with the tourists. Ellis will fly anywhere, but specifically he will go to Craig, Hydaburg, Klawock, Juneau, Petersburg and Wrangell with "frequent stops at all logging camps and canneries."

The navigational aids placed around the Territory under the supervision of the white-collar men of the CAA in Anchorage are wide-spaced and of little or no value to the puddle jumpers. The little fabric-covered ships with their roaring single motors are not fitted with the $12,000 worth of radio equipment necessary to take advantage of the modern aids science and the CAA have given the Alaskan flyer. The bush pilot isn't so much interested in an astonishingly accurate weather plot from the Bureau as he is in knowing whether or not he can see his way through a certain pass in the mountains.

The need for the bush pilot in Alaska's transportation scheme will not be supplanted for a long time. It is not economical for a big plane to make short fifty- or sixty-mile hops, picking up an Indian here, dropping a load of groceries there. The big ships, flying on regular, clock-like schedules to Bethel, Nome, and Juneau start out at a scheduled time, fly over a predetermined route, and come back on schedule. Though the area they traverse is as void as the innermost sections of the Sahara, they still keep to their routine.

The bush flyer free lances and is at the beck and call

of anyone with the ready cash. He'll fly anywhere, anytime, so long as there is a chance for profit and not too much danger that he'll lose his ship or his life. He will come down if he passes over a cabin and sees a trapper waving a blanket at him. He'll fly 500 miles from Fairbanks to Whitehorse in order to let passengers catch a train down to Skagway, or he'll fly 500 yards across a river that is breaking up in the spring. He's the Royal Blue Taxi of the Interior and the winged ferry of the coastal islands. He's ready at the drop of a dollar.

There is still the Anchorage-Fairbanks flight to be made . . .

Out in the rain somebody lifts a finger and one of the props on the ship comes to life, sending a rippling river of rain down the concrete runway. The ground crew scurries away from the rain blasts and stands in the cinder path, laughing at the guy with the wagging finger.

A young fellow in a gray uniform walks from an inner room into the plainly furnished waiting room of the Alaska Airlines, juggling a coke bottle in his fist. He squints out the smeared window, takes a final swig at the coke and says quietly, "Let's go."

One of the two young girls at the wooden counter fiddles with some switches, picks up a mike, and speaks very formally in that twenty-by-twenty room, "The Alaska Airlines announces the departure of Flight Eleven for Yakutat and Juneau, connecting with planes for Seattle and all points in the States. Passengers will please board the plane at once." She could have spoken the same words in a normal tone to the passengers huddled about and the message would have been heard distinctly, but the microphone is the touch. The airlines of Alaska are growing up.

Even before she is finished there is a wild scurrying for the door, and the Juneau-bound boys and girls are swarming

down the concrete walk, sloshing through puddles, and climbing the ramp into the plane. There is a moment of silence, then a fierce rattling of the doorknob, and a young fellow rushes in muttering, "I forgot my coat." Then he is gone and in the plane. The door is slammed shut, the props spin, and the ship trundles down the concrete toward the distant runway.

Even while it is still in sight there is the inevitable late passenger, a sad-eyed old man who grows sadder as one of the girls at the counter whispers, "I'm sorry. You're too late for the Juneau plane. You must have overslept." He nods in agreement and walks uncertainly out to the cab waiting in the rain.

A very drunken man and a carelessly dressed young lady, who holds herself well and has bright eyes and lips too quick to laughter, walk in arm in arm and purchase tickets on the Fairbanks plane. They have no baggage and are dressed as though they were just stepping down to the corner grocery before beating up a couple of eggs for breakfast, but the man pulls out a very fat wad of twenty-dollar bills and peels off four of them, arranging them in a neat pattern on the glass-topped counter.

One of the girls behind the counter comes and looks out into the rain to the deserted runway. She wears harlequin glasses and looks businesslike, but she is very young, barely eighteen. "The plane for Fairbanks is being held up over at Merrill Field," she explains. "Something is wrong with the radio. You'll be an hour late taking off." She has been in Anchorage and Alaska only a month. Her husband, a mechanic, is employed at the North Pole Bakery in town, though what a mechanic does around a bakery she does not explain. But he is one of the servicemen who did come back to Alaska with the intention of settling.

He spent three years at Fort Richardson, from the time

it was first started in 1940 until early in 1943 when he sailed down the chain and stepped into the bloody hole of Attu. Then there were the States, and Billings, Montana, and marriage. They hit Anchorage with no previously arranged jobs, just his conviction that Anchorage was the place for them to carve a future. The jobs came within hours—but no home or apartment of their own. They have spent the month since their arrival living in a room in a private home, eating all their meals out. The girl's salary is barely enough to pay the restaurant bill. But she likes it, and her husband's faith in Anchorage's and his own future is unshaken. He hopes to find a partner with mechanical experience and open a garage. With his skill and his young wife, and their love for the country, he is a valuable addition to the Territory.

The Fairbanks plane rumbles in from servicing over at Merrill Field. Everyone boards and waits for the take-off. The Alaska Airlines and all the civilian airlines still service their planes over at Merrill Field. Afterwards they hop three miles and come down at Elmendorff to take on passengers. As fast as the Army loosens its grip on Elmendorff, the civilian lines will take over.

The plane goes up in a rush, and the hangars fall below, and Anchorage is huddled in misty rain and lowering clouds. There is a long, sweeping swing over Knik Arm, and the nose of the plane is slightly tilted while it reaches for 11,000 feet. The ground has disappeared, and the ship is in a sea of fog and rain and mist. Only occasionally is there a glimpse of land or the chalky blue of lakes. The rain runs in tiny, straight streams across the windows, held prisoner by the blast of the prop just overhead.

The visibility keeps dropping until it is barely possible to see the wing tips, and the passengers think about the eager teeth of the Chugach Mountains just ahead. Palmer and the Matanuska Valley are somewhere beneath, but the

world is now just a sea of fog and rain. A man gets to thinking uneasy thoughts and is glad when the stewardess, back from her rounds of handing out magazines and a paper cup to the bright-eyed young lady who is now not so bright-eyed, comes and sits beside him. He takes his eyes away from the rain-drenched window and shows her his fountain pen dripping ink like tears. That calls for laughter and an offer to take the pen back and drain it, but he sets it on the floor by his feet and listens to the girl while she talks.

She's been on the job three months. The Alaska Airlines is another of the Territory's expanding industries that seems to be leaping from the cradle stage right into maturity, and the young lady was lucky to be present at the leaping. She came to Alaska in 1942 because she had been a nurse's aide and thought that Alaska, threatened by the Japs, was one place where she might have practical use for her knowledge. Only she by-passed her objective, and went to work for the War Department, doing clerical work in those first hectic days when it was touch and go whether the Japanese or the American War Department would be boss in Alaska. There was a year of that before a call came for hostesses at Mt. McKinley National Park. The Army had taken over the park and hotel and was using it as a rest area for officers and men made slap happy by too many months out in the chain. A young fellow, fed up to the neck with endless months of snow and rain and fog, with no hope of escape and no chance to kill or be killed, gets soured, no good to himself or to the Army. But send him into a place like the hotel in the park, let him sleep a few nights on a comfortable bed and watch fascinated while hot water flows out of a tap, let him talk a while, dance a while, play a while with a pleasant young woman, perhaps the first woman he's seen in a year or more, and it does something for him. Call it morale.

Up at the park was a young GI, a sergeant stationed there as a skiing instructor. He had had lots of experience in the business and used to stage big-time ice carnivals back in the States. Anyhow, he was up there, and the girl was up there, and pretty soon they were married. He is a very fortunate fellow. He hopes soon to be discharged from the Army, but in the meantime they are not letting the grass grow under their feet. Already they have a concession from the city of Anchorage for the use of the ice-skating rink out at the ball park during the winter months. This is the beginning. They dream of building an elaborate year-round enclosed ice-skating rink, and staging worth-while ice carnivals. They want to out-do the Fairbanks Ice Carnival, crown a Miss Anchorage, an Ice Queen of their own, and most of all, cater lustily to the tourists who will be streaming through Anchorage in all seasons of the year. They've taken to Alaska, and all their plans center around the Territory, and, again, the Territory is enriched.

But the young lady with the bright eyes is in trouble and tapping the stewardess on the shoulder. The latter reaches up for a blanket and is off to her duties.

One hour on the way, and the mist is drifting by as the ship passes the first peak of the snow-sieged Alaska Range. Then the mist is gone completely and the August sun comes out strongly. Far to the right is the majesty of Mt. McKinley, 20,300 feet of mountain towering like a proud lord over the range of smaller mountains.

With the bad weather behind, the door at the front of the passenger's compartment opens and the young pilot—about twenty-seven and on the chubby side—steps out to have a cup of coffee. The stewardess introduces him. He speaks with a soft drawl which is hard to account for until he explains that practically all the pilots and ground crews of the Alaska Airlines come from Atlanta. The company

buys the DC-3's there, and as part of the bargain, Douglas throws in the pilots and ground crews. Almost every state in the union seems to be reaching up to put a finger on this pulsing postwar Alaska.

The pilot, coffee cup in one hand, motions toward the long settee on the side of the ship. "This heah plane used to be Gen. Hap Arnold's personal job. The old boy used to sleep theah on long hops. This ship sure has been around."

Then he tells about the big cargoes of freight the ship has carried—space made by ripping out the six forward seats—crates of vegetables and chunks of meat, pieces of furniture, boxes of baby chicks, and once even a reluctant cow.

The terrain over the Alaska Range is awesome, a sea of white peaks. If there is any place below for a safe emergency landing, it is hidden securely under the rolling terrain. But the motors of the ship keep humming in a steady monotone, and a man forgets about emergency landings. There is ice on the windows, but when he scratches it off and looks sharply at the wings, he sees that they are clear, and thinks, "To hell with worry! Let the pilot handle the ship!" The range is passed, the flat ribbon of the Tanana River is now winding below, and the ground settles down to soft rolling hills. The stewardess comes to the bright-eyed one. "I'll take your blanket. We're just about in now."

The ship is dropping quickly from its 11,000 feet, and the soft hills are reaching up to touch it. It drops by the cluster of buildings marking the University of Alaska, glides down past a creek, touches the wheels gently, then firmly against the ground, and races wildly forward on the runway to slow down and stop by the old hangar. The motors cough and the props come to rest. This is Fairbanks.

The old man from Seattle's Chamber of Commerce grabs a briefcase, lifts a finger to a cab, and disappears.

# SEPTEMBER

## AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 50.4 | New York | 66.6 |
| Anchorage | 47.9 | St. Paul | 61.0 |
| Fairbanks | 43.6 | Spokane | 58.6 |

September finds the kids heading back to school in Juneau, Fairbanks, Nenana, Afognak, Kodiak, Moose Pass, and Crooked Creek. Behind them are ten weeks of work on the trolling boats, in canneries, in the mines, on the farms of Matanuska and Homer and the Tanana Valley, in the stores of Fairbanks and on the Government engineering project around Juneau.

Around Barrow small lakes begin to freeze.

In Anchorage the Alaskans wake up each morning to find the snow creeping downward on the Chugach mountains. In Matanuska the whole family is working around the clock getting in the potato crop. Late in the month the first fishing boats slip back into the small boat harbor at Ketchikan, breaking out strong lines for the winter's mooring at the creaking dock.

The tourists have gone, and the Territory settles back to a calmer pace, although the fever of activity never stops around Fairbanks. The temperature there is still moderate, and the water is gushing out in an endless flow around the diggings. Supplies still go out to the miners.

In the Nordale Hotel the janitor begins to crack on the steam at night to take the chill from the air, but there is still good weather, and that means the dipping of the dredge buckets, the bucking of the strippers, and the sifting of the tiny flakes of gold.

CHAPTER NINE

# Gold Is Where Professor Finds It:

## FAIRBANKS IN SEPTEMBER

THE UNIVERSITY of Alaska, situated just outside Fairbanks, attracts nearly twenty-five per cent of its student body from homes as far away as New York and New Mexico. It's another example of the strong, magnetic pull of the Territory.

There is a young fellow who climbed through the school system back in Washington, D. C., then, by dint of much persuasion, convinced his father, a hard-headed building contractor, that Alaska was the only place in the world for a man to study mining engineering. The Colorado School of Mines may snort in protest, but Colorado no longer has the lure possessed by Alaska.

Arrived in Fairbanks, "Queen City of the North," the boy finds neither a roaring metropolis, which his father had pictured after talking with some enthusiastic Washington employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, nor the hell-raising, gun-totin', whip-lashing frontier town the boy had secretly dreamed about. Fairbanks is inhabited by 5,000 very earnest people, who raise no more rumpus than the people of any other town, whose guns are all legitimate, and whose whips long ago were replaced by self-starters. The fact that the town swelters during the summer and then adjusts itself to living in fifty-below weather during the winter, merely adds color and zest to the process of earning a living.

The boy takes a walk and finds an old man puttering around outside his cabin, a tiny thing about six feet wide and ten feet long, surrounded by a row of five-gallon oil cans set six inches away from the wall. The space between the cans and the cabin is filled with sawdust, protection against the long fingers of sub-zero weather. "No," the old man says, looking down toward the cold-faced Chena Slough, "it's hard to find anybody in town who's been here over seven years. Most of the old-timers are either dead or gone Outside. These people," he says, pointing his shovel toward the few frame homes all about, "they come in since the war. Guess you might call them the new Fairbanks."

Part of the old Fairbanks, and dominating the business section, are the twin stacks, black and ugly, of the Northern Commercial Company's powerhouse. The N. C. Co. burns a lot of Alaskan coal to generate the steam that turns the turbines for the electricity consumed in the Fairbanks area. The steam in turn is piped into the business district and sold as good, dependable heat. The steam pipes are snuggled up against the water pipes underground to prevent the latter from freezing. The idea is good, but in spite of it the bitter cold weather is sometimes victor in the struggle, and the sewage system suffers. The ground, freezing and buckling, twists the pipes in every conceivable way, and causes some bad times for the inhabitants of the Queen City.

Yet it isn't fair to judge a town by a twisted sewer system, nor by any first impressions. If the boy did that, then Portland, Oregon, would be wiped off his list the minute he stepped out of the S.P. Station and gawked along Sixth Street with its gin houses, down-at-the-heels-cafes, Gospel missions, and burlesque houses. But that isn't Portland, so it isn't fair for the boy from Washington, D. C., to stand on the curb in Fairbanks on Second Avenue and look around him,

weighing the town in the palm of his hand and rendering a quick judgment.

He looks across the narrow concrete streets to the half-million-dollar, four-and-a-half-story layout of the *Daily News Miner*—a good building, but one that would be lost among a thousand similar ones in any large town in the States. But he must realize that every stick and stone and every piece of furniture and equipment in that building was carted 2,500 miles from the States. Fairbanks is proud of the *News Miner* Building, and the boy should take his hat off respectfully to the dull gray concrete. But right alongside it is a one-room shack hardly ten feet square, jammed full of half-empty oil drums, a dirty desk, and a pretty girl at the telephone answering calls for taxicabs. And on the other side is the staring, empty shell of a wooden building newly burned out, with no chance of repairs or replacement until late next spring.

At his back is the three-story wooden Nordale Hotel, the best in Fairbanks, with its front newly decorated in light-toned wood and chrome. Stretching down toward Cushman street are a fur shop, a curio shop, a ten-foot cab office, a ten-foot barber shop, a vacant lot, a jewelry store, the brand-new front of the North Pole Bakery, a drugstore so new it hasn't yet acquired its shining front, an insurance office, the Canadian-Pacific Air Lines office, and then a burned-out space where once was a butcher shop, a barber shop, a tavern, a bar, and a hardware store. Surviving the holocaust are a liquor store and a grocery.

On closer inspection, around at one side of the Nordale Hotel, snuggled in quietly and minding its own business, he finds another ten-foot liquor store. Out of eighteen business houses, four are liquor stores. The percentage holds up nicely.

Just down the street is the big yellow mass of the Post

Office and Federal Building. Then beyond another short stretch there is the narrow iron bridge across Chena Slough, a widening, swift-running stretch of water neatly cutting the town in two. The bridge is so narrow that buses and large trucks must straddle the middle, blocking traffic coming the opposite way. And the walkway for pedestrians is so compact that when a person comes toward him, a man has to turn and pretend to be looking interestedly over at the waters of the Slough in order to let the other go by.

The business district is a hodgepodge of buildings and establishments that look as though they had been in a mad race for space, all arriving breathlessly on the scene at once, and throwing down stakes without bothering to notice what neighbors each might have. If there were any zoning laws in the city, they have been pushed into the background during the activity of the war years. And who wants zones in a city so close to the Arctic Circle? The idea is to get a building over one's head, to get protection from the mosquitoes that come zooming in summer, and the sub-zero temperatures that come creeping silently during the winter.

Only after one leaves the business district and starts walking along First Avenue, paralleling the Slough, does one begin to get the feel of the town, and understand the writer who once said, "Fairbanks has a charm of its own."

Leave the Pioneer Hotel behind, and the Northern, and the tin-sheeted masterpiece of the Masonic Temple, and start looking at the homes the people have built.

All of them are comfortable, with a bit of grass-covered ground about, and each with a double thickness around the bottom where the layers of sawdust and earth are piled. Old and new alike have corrugated sheet-metal roofs, most of them painted a greenish gray. Someone must have discovered the value of corrugated metal in preventing fires from the sparks that swarm prodigiously from every chimney.

To the 5,000 who make up Fairbanks' population, it seems to be a badge of honor to have a noble set of moose horns or caribou antlers jammed above the doorway, much as some farmers hang a horseshoe over the barn door. Everywhere one turns there is a vicious pair of antlers readv to stab the unwary.

September is a happy medium between the dark days of December and the equally odd days of June and July when there is almost continuous daylight. While the boy walks in the morning there is the smell of fresh wood smoke in the air and a restful quiet in the calm atmosphere that is entirely devoid of even a whisper of wind.

He can duck through the open door of the deserted swimming pool, gaping and odd-looking with its concrete dipping far on one side and tiny pools of water and ice beneath the galvanized pipe that will hold a diving board in ten months' time. He can walk by on the wooden sidewalks, kicking lightly at the frost formed during the night. Down by the bend in the Slough he hears a cacophony of howls and barks from the dog pound where monster sled dogs, like heavyweight police pups, are boarded until the snow is full upon the frozen ground and Fairbanks starts frolicking with winter sports.

While he is looking down at a hill of potatoes in a home garden, a blond young man of about twenty-four walks by with a slatternly Indian squaw. She is clasping a pillow behind her back for no apparent reason, and the men's socks she is wearing flop down miserably about turned-over shoes. He glimpses her hard sharp face as she turns to listen to the young man who waves an arm in the air and says,

"I tried and tried and tried to help him. I spent seventy dollars trying to get him out of jail."

Everywhere a man looks there are new homes, neat attractive homes, well painted and well designed, but all of them

small, because to heat a large house in this land is a monumental problem. Yet the traces of the old times are never lost entirely, for in the midst of new lumber and white paint, one sees a tiny log cabin, well chinked, with smoke drifting from the tin pipe thrust through its roof. Not just one log cabin but dozens. In fact, many of the nicer homes along First Avenue are built of logs. But inside there is comfort that is not surpassed in Virginia. A man needs only the warmth of a good fire, a soft chair and children playing on the floor, and he is at home anywhere in the world.

In one of those houses lived Clara Adams, whose husband was formerly a science professor in the Fairbanks High School. Clara and George Adams have now gone back to a city in New Jersey, exchanging places for one year with a young teaching couple who wanted to see Alaska.

Professor Adams had his master's degree. He left the University of Washington in 1935 and set out for Alaska with his wife and three growing children. Life was a grim affair in those depression days. It was "Mister" Adams, then, while he was traveling about into the remote corners of the Territory, giving extension courses to hard-bitten miners. Clara stayed behind in the apartment in Fairbanks, lining up the two boys and the little girl for morning inspection before sending them down the hard, frozen streets to the public school.

She was going through an experience shared by many other Alaskan wives—waiting, taking care of the children and the home while the man went off to the fishing grounds, to the gold creeks, the prospecting trips, the hurried business trips to the States. But there was the determination to stick it out with the dishes, the dark days of winter, the muddy boots, and the children scrambling in the snow.

For her husband it led to the position in the Fairbanks High School and a good measure of security, and a handsome

log home with huge windows looking out toward the Slough. The children have now gone to the Navy or to homes of their own, so this year in the States will be a holiday for their parents. But Alaska will be on their minds every day until their return.

The Government, responsible for importing thousands of civilian workers to do the pen and ink work out at Ladd Field on the outskirts of the town, has stepped in with a housing project that is an asset. The Denali apartments, out by Weeks Field, are a string of smart, two-storied, varicolored units, capable of sheltering scores of families. They are permanent additions, not jerry-built. Only a government with easy money to spend could breathe into existence a housing project so formidable in an area so remote. Now, with the war ended and many war workers and civilians leaving town, Fairbanks will come into a reservoir of substantial housing.

It takes a bit of time for the Government to make up its mind about these projects. Hundreds of young women were recruited from New York, Miami, and the entire eastern seaboard, given an attractive one-year contract, and sent up to Fairbanks to work in the multitudinous offices of Ladd Field. When the girls saw the tar-papered elegance of the Slater Camp, a collection of well-used barracks across the Slough, they decided Alaska had not gone far beyond the rough, tough days of Jack London. It was only with the war thundering to a close that the Government brought the Denali Apartments off the drawing boards and into reality. Peace came before the first coat of paint was dry on the new lumber, a neat bit of timing.

At breakfast the boy from Washington again runs into the young man with the Indian squaw. On the man is a Roman collar. After they leave, the waitress tells him the story. John Balcum is the Episcopalian missionary from

Tanacross. His fine, intelligent face and sharp, clear eyes are typical of his native New England and Boston. He attended the Seminary there, and on one of his vacations came up to Alaska to help build the church at Tanacross. In 1943 he came back to Alaska as a full-fledged missionary. He travels by bus, plane, dog sled, and motor boat to get around and take care of his Athapascan Indians. The squaw? She is tubercular, and he's here in Fairbanks to put her on the train for Seward, where she'll board a boat and eventually wind up in the hospital at Skagway. The woman is part of his job.

The boy goes back to his hot cakes, marveling at New England and Boston and the courage of a man who willingly devotes his young life to Athapascan Indians.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was a whisper of a stampede that brought Fairbanks into being back in 1902. In that year Felix Pedro discovered the gold-bearing creek now labeled with his name. Hard on his heels came a trader with a huge supply of grub, equipment, and intelligence. The trader set himself up in business, sent runners with news of the strike up and down the Yukon, and sat back to await the stampede. The hordes came; the trader sold them everything but his suspenders and made a fortune. The town of Fairbanks remains to this day the outfitting base of a vast mining area extending in every direction. It is the bread, butter, and beans supply house, the heart and stomach of the golden North.

Fairbanks and mining are synonymous. It is difficult for one to live without the other.

The number of men employed in the mining industry in the Territory has fluctuated widely over the past thirty years. Back in 1916 there were 8,600 men working in the various mines of all types throughout Alaska, then activity fell off gradually and reached a low in 1923. The figures

show an increase again during the twenties, only to fall with everything else in 1932 and 1933.

With the increase in the price of gold, the industry fought its way back and reached a lusty 6,400 in 1940. But with the coming of the war, the Government requisitioned every available piece of machinery and all the manpower, and the mining industry fell into a downward slump that almost wiped it out of existence.

During all these fluctuations, Fairbanks was breathing hard or breathing easy with the rise and fall of the gold production.

Under ordinary circumstances, with the number of men in mining reaching an all-time low of 1,450 in 1943, and nearly a quarter of them in coal mines, Fairbanks would have folded quietly and joined the ranks of the ghost towns along the Yukon and its tributaries.

Luckily for the town, however, P-38's, B-17's, concrete runways, low, squat hangars, hundreds of girl typists, and scores of Russian flyers stepped in to fill the breech left by the dying mining industry. The Northern Commercial Company, which is equipped to supply everything from mammoth bulldozers down to the very latest thing in bathmats and face cloths, concentrated on the latter and made out well.

A girl living alone in Fairbanks is tempted to buy almost anything that has brightness and a bit of gaiety. What she doesn't buy, the young GI or officer from Ladd Field buys for her. Everything in sight is sold out promptly, and no one is worrying much about the mining industry except the miners.

The miners are banded together in an outfit called the Alaska Miners' Association. It includes the giants of the industry like the United States Smelting Company of Fairbanks and the Alaska-Juneau down at Juneau, along with the little fellows out at Cleary Creek pushing around with

their bulldozers and shoving pipes down into the frozen ground.

On the stationery of the Association, heavy with names known throughout Alaska mining circles, the executive office is listed as Fairbanks; the winter office as Seattle. In reality the office in Fairbanks is a staked-off section of the Nordale's lobby, with two filing cases behind it and a huge wall map of the Territory off to one side. Behind the desk, dragging on a monstrous pipe, is thirty-two-year-old Al Anderson, the executive secretary.

Al has a dream job, the secret envy of many Alaskans—six months of glorious summer weather in the Territory, six months of fall and winter down in Seattle. He's tall and lanky, with thin hair and school-teacherish mannerisms, but he's a likeable sort, and didn't fall into his present job by accident. Ten years back he was leaning on a muck stick down in the Alaska-Juneau's mill, alternating between shoveling tailings into a swift-running flume and giving vent to polysyllabic utterances about the dizzy course of world events. He started at the bottom of the A. J., the largest hard-rock gold mine in the continent, but there was a college degree mixed up in it someplace, and there by his side was J. A. Williams, the superintendent of the Alaska-Juneau and also vice-president of the Alaska Miners' Association. Out of that combination of circumstances, Al became executive secretary of the Miners' group, and the choice was a happy one.

He claims no credit for any of the work being done by the Association, but someone must see to consolidation in the buying of supplies for outfits sprinkled all over a wilderness. Someone must prod the members into activity on legislative problems affecting mining, getting them to do a bit of lobbying while the Legislature is in session down in Juneau, and generally looking out for themselves, the mining industry. The group presents an almost solid front of Alaskan

mine owners since ninety per cent of the gold produced in the Territory is brought out by members of the Association.

They have their problems, big ones. They worry over the return of their heavy equipment by the Government, and the shape it will be in. Most of the stuff is rusting out on the Aleutian chain, and only the most optimistic expect their bulldozers and scrapers to come rolling back to the mountains and tundra ready to work again. They must start from scratch and acquire new equipment.

The miners also worry about the return of their experienced men scattered all over the face of the world. If there was one group the Government was avid for during the construction heydays of the war, it was the men experienced in the operation of bulldozers and cats, men who knew how to use a case of dynamite effectively, who knew what a starter steel was for, and how to slam an air compressor into operation. Age was no barrier in the quest, and young or old, the Government took every good man from the mines of the Territory.

The Association hopes soon to have seventy-five per cent of its mines, if not in active operation, at least able to operate. According to Anderson, one of the greatest needs of the industry, after the return of the skilled help and the equipment, is new roads to the mining areas. "Build roads into these places. Let us get our equipment in and the mining industry will take care of itself. It will grow and expand and give employment to thousands despite all the hampering restrictions placed upon it."

The future of the base-metals industry in Alaska is dependent upon adequate and competitive transportation. That word "competitive" is a little dig Anderson throws in the general direction of the Government's monopoly, the Alaska Railroad. He knows all the ills connected with the railroad and will recite them to you with little prompting. Yet he is

fair in his criticism and is willing to give the railroad its due.

He will tell how before the coming of the railroad in 1923, Fairbanks was only two feet out of the grave. All the high-grade deposits had been worked out, transportation was dependent solely on river boats, overland stages, and the colorful dog teams. The town was isolated, and it cost money even to breathe. Hauling a dredge into the adjacent mining area, the only feasible way of working the remaining low-grade sands, was impossible economically. Fairbanks was dying of anemia.

But with the railroad completed, the big companies moved in—big outfits with names familiar to Wall Street. The company managers were smart men who knew how to get a return on every dollar—even if it took an expenditure of $20,000,000 to start the returns trickling in. Their equipment and supplies came in over the railroad; the plans were made around its operation. And Fairbanks came back to life.

A big bone of contention between the industry and the Government is the habit the Department of the Interior has of calmly chalking off immense areas of land and posting "No Trespassing" signs upon them. During the war, the Department marked off as military reservations about 48,000,000 acres of land in Northern Alaska, 15,000,000 acres in the Alaska Peninsula, and far more than 1,000,000 in the Katalla district. These total more than one-sixth of the entire area of Alaska. Northern Alaska is still concealed behind an American "iron curtain," but the Department has grudgingly returned to the public domain the other confiscated areas.

One such deal that left the Alaska Miners Association gasping was the setting aside of no less than 1,408,000 acres of land for the exclusive use and occupancy of sixty Indians. Sixty Indians on a million and a half acres. Those Indians are going to get lonely. In the meantime, if a white man so much as pitches a tent on the mosquito-infested acres, he is

liable to be run in for vagrancy or housebreaking by the nearest United States Commissioner.

B. D. Stewart is Commissioner of Mines for the Territory of Alaska. Everybody and his brother are interested in Alaska's mining possibilities. Into Stewart's office every year come an average of 1,500 people, all of them seeking information or assistance in matters relating to the mineral industry of Alaska. The visitors include not only casual seekers after a stray gold mine, but also bona fide prospectors, engineers, and cautious investors who require authentic information on favorable areas for prospecting, or concerning individual properties that might warrant development and financing.

In addition to these people who bother to make a personal visit, his office receives an average of 4,000 letters each year, a large percentage of them from men in the military service who are making plans for vocations in this postwar world. As usual in such cases, most of the inquiries are from persons wholly unfamiliar with conditions in the Territory. These are mostly by the "Jack London boys," who spend lonely nights in occupied Japan and Germany dreaming of icebergs and dog sleds and a fast stampede down the Yukon.

Still, Stewart is optimistic about the future of mining throughout all of Alaska and believes, in line with the Alaska Miners' Association, that revival of the industry will be rapid. New gold-mining enterprises of major proportions, in the fields of both lode and placer mining, have already been initiated, and they will be equipped and manned as rapidly and extensively as conditions permit.

Where Stewart really endears himself to the dreamers of dreams, however, is in his recommendation for more prospectors in the Territory to get out in the field and uncover the precious stuff hidden beneath the tundra of the Interior and the forest-covered mountains of southeastern

Alaska. "More extensive, better directed, and better financed exploratory prospecting and development activity is the primary need of the mining industry in Alaska. This is essential to its future normal growth."

In his latest report to the Governor, Stewart says that the time is opportune for the Territory to assist this development. The demand for mining properties far exceeds the number of proved deposits available.

Back in 1927 the Territorial Legislature passed the well known Grubstake Law, under which $30,000 was appropriated for assistance to prospectors. Some unforeseen hitches developed. For one, the prospectors drank up all their grubstakes and then forgot or were in too great a stupor to get out and prospect. Since 1931, saddened by the experience, the Legislature has likewise forgotten to include any money for grubstaking in its appropriations. But the Commissioner of Mines is plugging for the return of the law and the granting of the money, with any amendment needed to make sure the recipients of the grubstake bounties get out and dig instead of getting under and drinking.

In addition, he suggests that the Legislature provide some form of mining activity and training for returning soldiers. He suggests camps for training prospectors and miners in the regions known to be mineralized, with practical applications of the methods taught by qualified instructors. This is not a pipe dream, either, for he points to the years prior to the war when British Columbia provided grubstakes and transportation to its prospectors, a practice that was revived in 1944 with an appropriation of $50,000.

He is enthusiastic about the training program, but the Alaska Miners Association, the taxpayers of the Territory, are definitely cool toward the idea. They still remember vividly the drinking bouts mixed in with the last try at subsidizing.

However, Stewart thinks it's a good plan. He singles out the University of Alaska, five miles outside of Fairbanks as a cooperative agency in setting the program in motion. The reputation of the University's School of Mines under Dean Howard G. Wilcox is widespread and solid. Few other mining schools in the continent have the field for study so literally in their backyards.

A bus runs to the University every half-hour. It passes the huge, white barns of the Creamers' Dairy, set far back from the highway and surrounded by clusters of cows, their noses to the grass. September in the Fairbanks area is one of the loveliest times of the year. After the heat and the mosquitoes of summer have gone, and before the bitter weather of November and December, in the warm sun, against the soft brown and green of the low distant hills the dairy might be almost any Connecticut farm.

Almost everyone's first impression of the University of Alaska is that it is a prison. The bus comes sweeping up a curve, climbs a slight hill, labors past the wooden cottage where President Bunnel lives in bachelor solitude, and on past a raw concrete, three-story building, the Harriet Hess Hall, a dormitory for women. There is a level space at the top of the hill, and the bus swings around to deposit the new students at a frame structure resting on concrete foundations.

Raw concrete. Somebody told the story of how Doctor Bunnel was given an appropriation to build a handsome and ornamental two-story building—to be Harriet Hess Hall. But the Doctor, in his zeal for expansion and his eyes to the future, cut out the fancy trimmings and with the money saved tacked on another story. So now he has a fine, large dormitory, and along with the other concrete structures on the campus, it looks like any self-respecting penitentiary in the States.

Doctor Charles E. Bunnel, the only President the University has ever known, opened the school in 1922 with six students. The first years were shaky ones, and the strongest features about the school were its claim of being the farthest north of any university in America and of having the most striking view obtainable of Mount McKinley, 120 miles away.

The claims were effective, and the enrollment climbed gradually until 1939, when there were 200 day students and an even larger number attending night courses. With the war and the departure of the young men for the Army, the enrollment dropped to a very disheartening sixty-nine in 1944. But with the opening of each new school year, the figures are climbing once more. One hundred has been reached, and the tide of returning veterans who will take advantage of the benefits coming to them under the Service Men's Readjustment Act or the Vocational Rehabilitation Act is expected to push the enrollment beyond anything ever before attained. The grounds have been cleaned up, new coat hooks put in the lunchroom, and the tuition increased.

Marking time, and teaching enthusiastically while awaiting the return of the GI's, is a faculty of twenty-four men and women whose talents and background are equal to those of the instructors in any school of the same size in the States. A few of this group have been associated with the doctor for a good many years, but among the rest there is a heavy turnover. Too many teachers come to stay for only a year, or two years, then drift away again to the States.

The University, a member of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools, offers courses in Agriculture, Arts and Letters, Business Administration, Civil Engineering, Education, General Science, Home Economics, Mining Engineering and Pre-nursing.

The boy from Washington looks around the grounds, and his eye is caught by a squirrel scampering excitedly

alongside Harriet Hess Hall, and down by the concrete powerhouse with its long bridge-like ramp a truck is slowly backing in, its exhaust smoking. But otherwise, the campus is deserted.

A hundred years from now that campus will have the mellowed, hallowed look of the greenswards of schools in the States that were old and gray when America itself was almost as new and raw as this University of Alaska. Schools take aging, like whiskeys—aging and memories and old men coming back to look at a chunk of stone and a bit of grass and the worn trunk of a tree.

But the University has a good start on memories, for no man who has ever tramped the hard-packed dirt roads high upon the hill will ever forget the magnificent view of the mighty giants of the Alaska Range in the distance. Not in the dim distance, for these giants are so huge and overpowering that 100 miles is as nothing. And over them all is Mount McKinley. There is a picture that will live forever.

But the place is still empty, deserted. Take 100 kids and scatter them into 100 rooms in a huddle of buildings and they tend to disappear. Perhaps if the newcomer wanders through the long halls, he can look into classrooms and see six sitting in front of one professor, and two before another, and one before still another in lonely audience. But there is a limit to peeking into classrooms.

Empty classrooms are lifeless. Maybe he can get the feel of the place in the lunchroom. Maybe he can find it in the sound of the hamburger sizzling on the stove or in the tinny sound of the radio with Fairbanks' KFAR excitedly retailing the news of a world 2,500 miles away, maybe in the sound of the ping-pong game in the recreation room across the hall, and in the sudden burst of laughter.

There is the sound of steam cracking in the radiators; the rattle of dishes; a girl hunched over the newspaper clears

her throat; the waiter hums a song while he fries another hamburger. He feels a wave of irritation. This isn't Alaska. This is Keokuk, Iowa; it's the lunchstand across the street from the railroad station in Cape May, New Jersey, and the only difference is Mount McKinley. So he gets out of there and walks along the hard-packed ground to the yellow building housing the gymnasium and library.

Maybe he can find the feel of the University in the library, all quiet and warm golden brown with shining varnish. There is a Sidney Laurence painting of Mount McKinley spotlighted on the wall. There are orderly shelves, great quiet, and emptiness. One girl is sitting alone, reading. The harsh jarring sound of the telephone rings through the emptiness.

And the feeling seeps through, and he begins to reach out to it uncertainly. Maybe this emptiness is the feeling he has been looking for. Maybe this is the tone of the place —empty, but full of fleeting figures.

Molotoff sat here at this table before him, and Litvinoff and Henry Wallace, and a host of lesser lights on their way from one world to another. Emptiness, but here great scientists worked, probing into the secrets of the Northland. Hardly a book has been written about the Territory whose author has not sat at this wooden table, deep in the treasures of some musty volume.

Surely this is the feeling—this emptiness, this space, and the long, long spells of silence—for this is Alaska.

Big buildings and a rattling handful of students. Twenty-three thousand volumes of written treasure—and a solitary reader under a yellow light. This is the University, and this is Alaska. Three hundred million acres, and spread over the acres, the tiny microscopic specks of only 80,000 human beings. This is the land of tomorrow and this is the school for the men who will come in the morning.

# OCTOBER

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

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|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 43.3 | New York | 56.1 |
| Anchorage | 36.4 | St. Paul | 48.6 |
| Fairbanks | 26.8 | Spokane | 48.4 |

In October, a silent change takes place over the huge northern section of Alaska. The temperature plummets to sixteen around Barrows; Nome sees the last steamer of the year head out into Norton Sound; the river steamers plying the Yukon head into shore to be pulled high upon wooden chocks away from the grinding ice of the river. Fairbanks is making a desperate effort to stave off the inevitable, making full use of this tenth month. But each morning white frost forms in thick sheets on the wooden planking used for sidewalks away from the center of the town.

The first snow whips down the streets of Juneau, and rain follows shortly after to turn it into a mess of slush and water puddles. Deer, moose, mountain goats, and bears take to their heels while the gun-totin' Alaskans start scaling the cliffs and sliding down forest trails in an effort to defeat the high cost of living.

In the air, planes fly without hesitation, and on the ice-free seas south of the Peninsula, steamships still keep their regular, year-'round schedules. But on the land, nothing is certain, for winter is around the corner.

Sometime during the month of October the heavy snows will blanket the highways of Alaska. On most of them the road crews will draw back and spend the winter repairing equipment, while the roads and the land adjoining revert to the silent, white fastness that has claimed them each year since the beginning of time. Around the towns and on a few chosen roads, the scrapers will be at work, fighting to clear the highways, but often the battle will be lost.

CHAPTER TEN

# The Hungry Highway:

## OCTOBER ON THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

THE ALASKA Highway is the most publicized and the least used road in the entire world.

If any part of the earth has not heard about the highway and the speed with which it was built, the fault does not lie with the Army Public Relations Bureau. Ten thousand American Army troops and 6,000 civilians cut a wide swath through virgin wilderness from Dawson Creek in British Columbia to Fairbanks in Alaska. The distance is 1,630 miles, approximately the distance from New York to Chicago and back. Sixteen hundred miles through absolute wilderness. The trials and tribulations of the builders were only exceeded by the tremendous publicity spotlighted on the undertaking.

Never did the bugles blow louder or the drums beat faster than during that hectic period from March, 1942, when work was started, until late November of the same year when, with tongues in cheeks and parkas well buttoned, the army brass hats shouted to the world the opening of the highway. A convoy of trucks butted against a blue ribbon and started to slog its way up to Fairbanks. Almost a year later to the day, with $160,000,000 spent on the road and another $130,000,000 on a companion project, the Canol pipeline from Norman Wells to Whitehorse, the Army was willing to forget the whole thing. Canada was already beginning to shrug its shoulders and disclaim any responsibility. It was our road. We could lift it up and take it home, for all Canada cared.

In May of 1944, Representative Warren G. Magnuson threw all pretense aside and announced dismally that the Alaska military highway was a gross failure. Congressman Magnuson of the State of Washington was then Chairman of the Alaska International Highway Commission and knew what he was talking about.

A year later, in June of 1945, President Truman must have been informed that, all Army publicity to the contrary, the Alaska Highway was like a severed limb tucked away in the woods. He announced to the press of the world, after consultation with Congressman-turned-Senator Magnuson and Alaska's Governor Gruening, that he was deeply in favor of the completion of the 600-mile gap between the Alaska Highway and the existing chain of roads in British Columbia. A 600-mile gap nearly three years after the Army ballyhooed the completion of the road! Mr. Truman said it was absolutely essential that the missing link be considered part of a postwar program, that it was a good project, and that he would support it. Two days later Alaska's delegate, E. L. Bartlett, introduced a bill in the House authorizing construction of the 600 miles. Mr. Bartlett is still hunting for his bill, wondering whatever became of it.

It is no wonder an American woman waited two years in Edmonton with her horses and wagon trying to get permission to drive over the highway up to Fairbanks. She finally became discouraged and shipped her gear north on a boat.

For thirty years Alaska begged and pleaded for a land link with the homeland. Plans were made and a route mapped, shooting straight north through the protecting valleys in British Columbia. Men who knew the country and knew its requirements had written at length on the necessity of the road. Then the time came and the mistake was made. Errors are plentiful in war and waste rampant. Shoulders can be

shrugged and taxes increased; the mistakes are forgotten and the waste is taken as a necessary evil. But it is hard for Alaska to forget this mistake.

It is hard to forget a man sitting back in the ease and comfort of New York State, surrounded by men of no vision, but having the power to say, "Here we will spend $50,000,000; here $100." They spread maps before them and with sharp pencils edge black lines upon them, choosing their own route for a road to Alaska. They ignore the warnings of men who had been dreaming of the road for thirty long years when money could not be secured by a wave of the hand. War comes, and a group of men sitting in New York City lay out the route, the one from which 600 miles has evidently disappeared from the face of this earth.

There are 1,630 miles of new road, and all but 302 miles of it built in Canadian territory. The puzzling part of the whole situation is that the entire length of the road is in good shape; the 600-mile stretch between Fairbanks and Whitehorse in Yukon Territory, Canada, could even be described as in splendid shape. A heavy bus can tool over its wide space at forty-five miles an hour with hardly a pause or the need to slow down. It has fine bridges, fine roadbed, fine grade. The only big engineering mistake was in not making the culverts larger. When the thaws come, both in the spring and fall, the water backing up around the culverts can eat out fifteen feet of highway in an hour's time. But the army engineers have done a brilliant job of road building and no apologies are needed for them or for their skill.

What, then is the trouble? Why is the major portion of this 1,600-mile miracle through a wilderness to be allowed to slip back into the rapacious mouth of the forest?

The road begins at Dawson Creek, in a sparsely settled, unproductive part of British Columbia, and ends up in Fairbanks, where other roads will lead one down to the sea.

The world was led to believe that the road started in Edmonton, which in turn is linked to the highway systems of the United States. In reality, between Edmonton and Dawson Creek, the start of the highway, there is a distance of 500 miles and a provincial dirt road, usable only in good weather. The road is so bad that it took a brand-new bus ten days to negotiate the 500 miles, and over most of it the bus was being towed behind a cat. The road is slick gumbo in wet weather, and whenever the bus stopped, it slipped over into the ditch. The United States Army sent three huge General Motors six-by-six trucks over the 500-mile stretch in the summer of 1945, and they were three weeks getting through.

Now here is the strange part. Of the 1,600 miles of road, the whole northern part from Dawson Creek into Fairbanks is in a good condition while the 500-mile link between Edmonton and the beginning of the road is nightmarish. Canada says flatly that the dirt road plus the Northern Alberta Railways, whose northern terminus is in Dawson Creek, satisfy the transportation needs of the sparsely settled region, so it is doubtful if either the Province of Alberta or the Dominion will spend any great sum to improve it. Especially since the President has come out in favor of an entirely new road north through British Columbia.

The highway has gone far from the hectic days when its completion was given an advertising build-up as a symbol of the defense of the Western Hemisphere. Riding high on the publicity wave with it were the $130,000,000 Canol project, ballyhooed as the savior of the airfields of Alaska; and the Catel project, a telegraph and wireless system paralleling the highway to supply weather reports to the various interested parties. The civilian construction workers will not forget the highway or the pipe line in a hurry. Working conditions in the forty-below-zero weather were unusual, but

so were the pay checks. A man could turn in twenty hours of work a day, time-and-a-half after the first eight hours, and own a young fortune at the end of the year. No one ever accused the construction stiffs of defrauding the Government, but charges of excessive profits, aimed at the civilian companies working on the projects, were shouted through Congress. The pot was boiling, and the money was there for the taking.

The Americans didn't supply everything. Under the agreement giving the United States a green light across Canadian land, the Americans were to build the road with American labor and American money. Canada was to furnish the rock, gravel, timber, and other materials found along the highway. The Americans were to maintain the entire length of the highway until six months after the cessation of the war.

Canadians are frank when they say, "Canada doesn't want this damned road. The Canadian Railroads don't want it. That's why you Americans will whistle a long time before anything is done about that stretch between Edmonton and Dawson Creek. And where do you think Canada is going to get $1,000,000 a year to maintain 1,300 miles of road through a wilderness, just on the hope that some American tourists will come through and buy gasoline? Why, man, we're a poor people!"

Something has been done about building a road that will be approximately All-Alaskan. One hundred and fifty-four miles of wilderness were slashed from Haines, just across from Skagway and eighty miles north of Juneau, to the north and east through the St. Elias range, and tapping the Alaska Highway 100 miles north of Whitehorse. Of the 154 miles, all but forty still must go through Canadian territory, but there seems to be no way of avoiding it save by swapping land between the two countries. The Canadians have always

looked wistfully at Skagway, but the good people of that town are willing to commit murder before they'll ever change the flag flying over the post office. It just can't be done.

The 154-mile stretch, labeled "The Haines cutoff" and built by the Army at a cost of $10,000,000, ostensibly to relieve the pressure on the White Pass and Yukon Railway, was also wiped off the slate by the military as soon as the pressure eased and the Japs fled from Kiska. Fortunately, the Territorial legislature came out strongly for its completion and year-round maintenance, and its possibilities as a tourist attraction, linked with the Alaska Highway into Fairbanks, are being studied.

At this late date, the Alaska Highway is still kept under wraps, even the usable portions. Private cars cannot traverse the highway without the personal sanction of the military. Control stations are located at strategic points, and at each station the driver of a car must stop and submit his authorization for approval before proceeding to the next station.

Traveling the 600 miles from Fairbanks to Whitehorse in beautiful October weather, one passes exactly six private cars on the entire stretch. The Army says it isn't safe for civilians to travel alone over the highway, that there are no conveniences, few gasoline stations, no garages. Yet in the first 400 miles south of Fairbanks there are no less than fifteen abandoned road-construction camps, many of them still set up with all facilities, including cots and mattresses. In addition there are emergency shelters dotted along the entire road. If the Department of the Interior can spend more than a third of a million dollars on a swanky hotel in Mount McKinley National Park in a despairing effort to boost the revenue of its Alaska Railroad, it could provide accommodations along the highway until the bus lines become profitable enough to open their own roadhouses.

As things stand now, there is not a single place where one can be sure of a cup of coffee between Big Delta and Burwash Landing, nearly 350 miles away.

The civilian bus making the run from Fairbanks down to Whitehorse is rigged up with spare tanks like a B-29, yet every foot of the way is paralleled by a three-inch pipe line with gasoline under pressure surging through it. It would take no stroke of engineering genius to tap the line every fifty miles and let a dribble of gas trickle out to highway traffic. Suppose there had been a three-inch water pipe running across the desert during the days of the California migration 100 years ago?

Fortunately for those who want a look at the highway and are unable to satisfy the Army's questions as to the need for looking, in the early fall of 1945 something new was started in the history of Alaska's transportation—scheduled civilian bus travel from Fairbanks to Whitehorse in Yukon Territory over 600 miles of the highway. A fellow named O'Harra got the mail contract on the twice-each-week overnight run, got himself a couple of new buses and two drivers with iron constitutions, and started selling tickets—$36.80 one way.

For a success story, listen to O'Harra and learn how a fellow not yet forty started a little chugger between Fairbanks and Livengood. When Ladd Field came into being outside the Queen City and other competition squeezed him out, he headed down to Anchorage and started hauling soldiers between that city and Fort Richardson, piling his profits back into the business, branching out in every direction, and keeping close on the heels of the Alaska Road Commission as fast as it spearheaded another opening into the wilderness. Soon he had twenty-five buses, all of them with catchy names like the Frontier Chief, the Glacier Chief, the Pride of Fort Richardson. Forging ahead, but all the time keeping

his eyes not just on the road but on the whole Territory of Alaska, he was eager to leap to new opportunities such as this run down to Whitehorse. It takes courage to pioneer a new run into land that has never known the turning of a commercial vehicle's wheels—and O'Harra is the man with the courage.

Early October is as good a time as any to make the run down the highway. There is always the possibility of snow while going through the mountains, but with any luck at all, the road will be dry and hard, the colors of the landscape turning to browns as the land slips over into winter.

Climb into the twenty-passenger bus this frosty Wednesday morning and take a seat right behind the driver, for there is no one like a bus driver to give out information during a long trip through a lonely country. Bus drivers were made to talk, all company rules to the contrary notwithstanding.

Charley Porter is a hard-bitten, soft-hearted Alaskan, heavy-set and affable, a man who knows the highway as well as anyone can after pushing trucks and buses and bulldozers over its entire length since the day back in March of 1942 when it first came into being. "A thousand dollars a month freighting pipe along the road while they were pushing it through. Boy, those were the days. Some of them damned cheechakos up from the States thought I couldn't handle a truck because I got white hair. Cripes, I been rolling Alaska roads long before they were born. Made more money than any of them freighting the road."

He needs an iron constitution to hold down his present job. Every Wednesday morning at eight, he pulls away in the twenty-passenger bus from the Nordale Hotel in Fairbanks and highballs for 600 miles down to Whitehorse by two o'clock the following afternoon. Twenty-four hours of rest in Whitehorse and he's pointing the nose of the small

bus north again. Whatever Charley collects in salary, he's worth it.

Even the passengers have to be two notches above the sissy level, for there are no delightful stops every hour as there are on the runs down in the States. The trip starts at eight in the morning, and it is problematical whether anyone will be climbing out of it until coming to Burwash Landing 450 miles away. Until a short time ago a coffee stop was made forty-one miles south of Fairbanks at the Blue Fox Inn. The owner of the roadhouse had the place divided into small rooms with tables and one large room filled with easy chairs, sofas, a juke box, and three slot machines. Square in the center was a huge, roaring Yukon stove—and that was the undoing of the Blue Fox. It burned to the ground in December of 1945.

All that is left for a passenger is to sit back in the softly upholstered seats of the bus, while Charley sets the speedometer at forty-five and keeps it there with scarcely a variation. Even the wooden bridges are met with a roar and a slight bump. But the needle never varies from forty-five. Prominent beside the highway, crushed rock pounded down to cement-like smoothness, is the pipe line that follows the highway every inch of the way down to Whitehorse. From there it pushes over 100 miles into Skagway at the head of Lynn Canal. Giant tankers come up from the States with sobbing pumps to force gasoline through the rusty ribbon up to Fairbanks, 700 miles away. The tankers supplant the abandoned Canol project—$130,000,000 gone back to wilderness.

Gasoline is a wonderful thing for a frontier country, and the war has brought it right through the heart of a wild land, to sprinkle it like a new flood of gold over the entire area.

The bus roars out the dusty road, elevated high over

the muskeg. It passes a lonely, sod-roofed cabin while heading always southeast into the glaring sun. Forty miles from Fairbanks is a big airfield, its control tower studded with blue windows, and a huge hangar and dozens of barracks. Similar airfields, silent and un-named to the public, are dotted throughout the Territory, known only to the men who built them and the flyers who brought 1,000 planes north from the States on their way to Russia.

The war has brought about marvelous changes, creating major airfields in the heart of a lonely land. Planes will use these fields—not just formidable army planes, but every conceivable piece of equipment with wings will start looking for places where it can leap into the air and places where it can set down in a hurry. These fields have bared the country as one pulls covers from a deep sleeper. There is bound to be a stirring.

For a time Charley has the bus hard on the road, straight and even as a die. The road itself must look like a good place to the pilot of a small plane in trouble, needing to come down quickly. In the winter, a pilot used to have his eyes on the smooth stretches of rivers and lakes for emergency landings. Now he has the road, summer and winter, and a man who couldn't set down a small plane on one of the many straightaways shouldn't be flying over Alaska's acres.

Bridges and abandoned road camps go hand in hand. The boys built the wood and tar-paper camps, built fine steel, wooden, and concrete bridges, then moved on into the wilderness, leaving the camps behind, all boarded up and lonely. There was a time when a man would move in with an axe and painfully and slowly build himself a log cabin out of stands of birch and spruce. Now there are dozens of abandoned camps, each with dozens of boarded-up buildings and enough lumber to build hundreds of small cabins.

The bus storms by Harding Lake, a flat, blue dish in the

rolling brown hills, and the sign pointing down a side road says, "Tourists Accommodated. Summer cabins." Charley remarks that the guy is making expenses from the people driving out casually from Fairbanks (the hard bite of army restrictions doesn't start until a few miles beyond) and in the meantime he is sitting back optimistically waiting for the tide of tourists he hopes will someday be rolling along the road.

Then Birch Lake is passed with a dozen log cabins perched neatly around its four-mile perimeter. People from the States would like to come up for an Alaskan summer and play around this beautiful bit of water. And the Empress and Lacey Street Theaters in Fairbanks are just two hours away whenever they might have the urge for a change in beauty.

On either side of the slate-gray road there are thick stands of dark-green spruce, so thick that neither a man nor a dog could possibly make any time breaking through them. Before the building of the road there was no cross-country traveling, either in summer or in winter. A man climbed the highest tree, took a bearing and then hacked his way to the nearest waterway. But by 1942 men had learned how to use a massive D-8 bulldozer to stomp down thin-boled timber, crush it under biting treads, then calmly spin about and push aside the fallen trees to be an endless wave of rotting timber marking the edge of the road. No one can cut down millions of trees and put a 1,600-mile road through in eight months. He knocks them down wholesale and pushes them aside.

The bus passes a few lonely, abandoned log cabins with grass growing brown from their sod roofs. Every cabin has a story of its own, but when rolling along at forty-five miles an hour, it is difficult to pick up whispers of days gone by.

The bus breaks out over a high ridge and far to the right stretches the Tanana River, meandering every which way,

broken up by a thousand little gravel islands. With a rush, Charley sends the bus across the long steel bridge spanning the Tanana at Big Delta. This is the place where the Department of the Interior operated the ferry and where an exorbitant toll was charged the truckers. And this is the place where Charley keeps an eye out for the wild buffalo.

Back in 1928 twenty head of buffalo were shipped up from the National Bison Range in Montana, and turned loose in this area. The buffalo took to the new land and flourished, and now there are more than 300. The herd, running wild, grew beyond all expectation. In time to come there will probably be an Alaskan Buffalo Bill, but right now Alaskans can't do anything but look at them, if they are lucky enough to sight some of the old boys with their beards sweeping the ground.

At Tok Junction, the halfway mark to the scheduled night stop, the bus is to connect with a company gas truck and load its emptying tanks for the 400 miles remaining between the Junction and Whitehorse. But the gas truck is not there, and Charley swears mildly while saying, "Good thing I didn't depend on him. I don't depend on nobody on this road. I do it myself."

This is the land of bitter cold weather, and some of the lowest temperatures in the Territory have been recorded here. It is even colder than most parts of the Arctic slope. In these vast stretches only four-legged animals move, hidden behind the thick stands of spruce, birch, and occasional white puffs of willow. Not a single man lives out in the wilderness, and there are only this flat road and the telephone wire and the rusty pipe line to mark the passing of human beings. The passengers begin to appreciate Charley's joking concern about his cardboard box full of spare parts; they begin to worry with him about the falling needle on the gas gauge. Charley can count on the fingers of both hands the cars he has seen

in the eight hours since leaving Fairbanks, and most of them were trucks of the Alaska Road Commission working close to their camps.

Still the motor keeps roaring, the wheels keep spinning, and with every hour forty-five miles of wilderness drop behind. And every hour increases the hunger that has a tight hold on seven stomachs. Thirteen hours from Big Delta to Burwash Landing, and nowhere in between a chance for so much as a cup of coffee.

To take his mind off his woes, Charley starts talking about the trucking business in Alaska and what it takes to make a success of it. A trucker in Alaska has to be his own mechanic, his own driver and must have his own truck. In addition, he has to sell himself as a reliable and dependable operator to the firms using his services. The Road Commission is going to try to keep the Alaska Highway down to Whitehorse open the year round, but most of the 1,400 miles of Territorial highways are open only from June 1 to whatever date in October the big snows come with a vengeance.

A good many young fellows have gone into the trucking business during the war boom, and the resulting surplus of haulers after the war makes for cutthroat competition. It's an easy business to get into since it doesn't take much capital —none at all if the newcomer happens to own a heavy chassis and can build some kind of a body on it. However, few of the young men going into the trucking venture figure on depreciation of their equipment, and they think they are doing well until it comes time to replace the truck. Because the season is so short, the truckers work long hours, eighteen or twenty a day, catch a bit of sleep, then turn around and go through the whole process again.

There is a fascination in boring through these Alaska wildernesses with a heavy load of valuable freight rumbling behind, and there is a lure in the wide-spaced roadhouses on

the Richardson and Glenn Highways up from the coast, where a man can shuck his shoes, draw up to a glass of liquor and swap hair-raising lies with the next man in. But underneath it all is just plain hard work. The fancy money vanished with the war. Big outfits are looking over the situation with a cold and calculating eye. If there is money to be made in consolidation, they will consolidate. Few little fellows can lick a big outfit when it comes to a rate war, and a lot of the war boomers will withdraw, abandoning their beaten trucks to the elements. But in a new country, with new roads opening every year, a "little guy" one year can be a "big outfit" the next, so no one is pulling out in too much of a hurry. Meanwhile Charley, a veteran of every type of trucking in Alaska, sticks to the O'Harra Bus Lines.

His talk is interesting, but hunger is still gnawing. There is a cold refusal of coffee from one of the army camps dotted along the highway, and everyone is glad the night is setting in to hide the sick, aching feeling.

There is a lake gleaming in the twilight and the road is a yellow cut, deep in the surrounding green and brown and black, and suddenly the low, rolling hills holding the bus prisoner remind one of the hills about Gettsyburg in the autumn twilight. All this is beauty, and the stuff that makes men grow limp before the grandeur of God, but in their minds the passengers are composing burning letters to congressmen and senators and the President, protesting the harsh indignity of allowing a citizen to starve his way across the width of Alaska.

In the darkness the bus leaps across the Canadian boundary, and bores on through the night, the long finger of its searchlight probing far beyond the headlights. There is a sudden shock of excitement in the quiet bus when Charley yells, "There's a bear!" Everybody jumps up to see the brownie imprisoned in the searchlight turn angrily, half

rising on its haunches. Then the bus speeds onwards, and the bear fades back into the darkness. Everyone has a different idea about the size of the bear.

At six o'clock the headlights turn into a huddle of frame cabins, and six passengers stream after Charley like obedient school children. There is a conference between the Canadian cook and the American foreman, and the cook's voice comes louder than the others, "Well, you're the boss. If it's all right with you, it's all right with me." The foreman smiles apologetically at Charley, "We're on rations ourselves, but the cook'll let you have a cup of coffee if that will hold you over." Coffee and a raisin pie and some cakes. After nine hours of slow starvation it is nectar. After fifteen minutes, everyone leaves, much happier for the coffee and pie tucked inside, and the cook has three dollars in his pocket.

The breeze has become a fluttering whistle in the darkness. Fourteen hours out of Fairbanks, the bus swerves to a halt at the Jacquot Brothers Roadhouse at Burwash Landing. World-famed Lake Kluane is within a stone's throw, but in the pitch darkness and the fan of the icy wind, the weary wanderers are conscious only of the desire for a warm meal and warm bed.

They get both at Jacquot's. The collection of log cabins has been standing since 1904, ever since Gene Jacquot, suddenly aware of the wisdom of serving beans and coffee to the swarms of prospectors in the region, tried his hand at hotel keeping in the rough. Strikingly dressed in plaid woolens, with the wind playing tricks in his thinning hair, this old man is one of the most famous of Yukon guides. He is a pioneer, an outdoorsman, a hunter, trapper, builder of wilderness homes, a man skilled in the handling of a dog team or a pack train, or truck. He came to this spot at the turn of a century and spent years wading through icy streams guiding rich hunters from all over the world. Now he is

crippled with arthritis and shuffles in moccasins while he talks. He is still famous as a guide and renowned as a hunter, but now he stays behind at the Landing, organizing the parties, and sends younger men out in the field to guide them.

He shows the weary passengers the beds—iron cots, soft woolen blankets, no sheets. The tourist will love this Burwash Landing and boast about roughing it and about sleeping in the same log cabins where Nelson Rockefeller spent forty days on a hunting trip. Nelson Rockefeller and General Wood and Wild Bill Donovan, and a flock of congressmen and senators have come in the past, for Jacquot's in Yukon Territory is a famous place. Long before the coming of the highway it was a familiar name on the tongues of rich sportsmen.

In the morning Charley gasses up with the hand pump from some drums sitting alongside the bus, then he blares impatiently on the horn, the passengers tumble in through the door, and the bus rumbles off down the highway. Two of Jacquot's Indian serving girls have joined the list of passengers.

By noon of the second day the bus has left superb Lake Kluane behind with its picture-book setting of mountains. The highway runs over the original wagon trail beyond Kluane to Whitehorse, and Charley stirs some memories when he says that Robert Service's Sam McGee was road foreman on this particular stretch of the old wagon trail.

There is a junction in the road. Bearing to the left is the Alaska Highway, running on down for 100 miles to Whitehorse and the empty rusting gasoline storage tanks of the huge refinery, terminus of General Somervell's $130,000,000 monument, the Canol project. Turn to the right and there is the Haines cutoff, plagued by slides, but running 154 miles down to salt water and American territory.

In the flat space between the two roads is a hut sheltering the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. A young fellow inches out from under a Chevrolet pickup truck, brushes the grease from his coveralls, and leads the way into the shack. He is a handsome Joe and a modern version of the RCMP who have traded in their horses for these new trucks fresh from Detroit. The one question fired at everyone in the Mountie shack is, "How quickly are you going to get out of Canada?" Those who answer, "As fast as I can get transportation," are treated with a smile. Those who are a bit doubtful go through some very efficient red tape while they answer, sign, and take duplicates of the wordy questionnaires with them. Canada is a good neighbor, but nobody loves an American with less than a few hundred dollars in his pocket.

While the Mounties are still asking their slow, insistent questions, Sam Barrow drives up in his little truck to get clearance from the police. He's seventy-two years old, and his hearing is beginning to fade, but the old boy is as tough and as wiry as a keg of nails. He's one of the old-timers who doesn't affect a standoffish contempt for anyone with less than twenty years' residence in the country. On the contrary, he's eager to meet new faces, and seems to welcome the thin stream of people trickling into this part of the Yukon Territory.

For forty-seven years Sam has been tramping about the Yukon Territory, chasing gold. For the past five years he's been working a claim far back in the hills beyond Kluane Lake. A bit of oil is showing on various parts of his claims, and, at seventy-two, he's still making every effort to get capital interested and to start test drilling. His enthusiasm and faith in the possibility of "one big strike" are just as bright and burning as on the day he first set foot in the land.

Sam is going down the Haines cutoff, planning to get over to Skagway where he will catch a Princess boat and head

for New York and another try at getting money to look deeper into his oil stains. He welcomes a passenger.

On the 154-mile road through cold wilderness grandeur he goes into minute details about the hardships of a prospector in either Canadian or Alaskan territory and the long seasons of fruitless effort that may pass before anything worthwhile is uncovered. And then come the maddening negotiations trying to get capital. It takes capital to dig deep shafts into frozen ground, run lateral tunnels, cut drainage ditches and bring in heavy crushing equipment. A man must first be an adventurer, tasting only the good things in a life burdened with hardships; after that he must shed his digging clothes, grab a boat or plane and go hat in hand to beg the moneyed interests to come in and share his profits. The numerous holes in the ground, with sagging rotting timbers, are ample evidence of the failure to combine adventuring with financing.

"Why is it, Sam, a man meets so few of the old-timers these days—so few of the men who came up here with the first strikes?"

He looks sideways and spits out the window, a long, beautifully arched flow of tobacco juice.

"Matter of simple arithmetic, son. Just about fifty years since all the excitement. Young squirt of twenty-two come up like I did, and today he's gettin'right along. If they ain't dead, they got sense and got out of the country—Seattle, California, maybe Florida." He must have sensed the unspoken question because he shot back, "But don't you worry about me—I ain't aiming to die for another twenty-eight years, and I got to do a lot of eatin' between now and then!"

There is a bad slide on the Haines cutoff, the one thing that has plagued engineers on this particular stretch of the road, along with the abnormally heavy snowfalls, but with the help of the Alaska Road Commission crew, Sam's truck is

pulled over the worst of the rubble and continues on the other side.

Speaking in a slow, even tone, with a remarkably fine choice of words for a man who has spent fifty years chasing a dream in the wilderness, Sam helps the hours fly by with tales of the old hell-raising days when the eyes of the world were focused on the stretch between Skagway and Dawson. He is deep in a recital of the gory murders that were once commonplace along the frozen Yukon when the truck bumps into Haines, Alaska, site of the lone military post that guarded the Territory back in the ancient days of 1939.

With the fresh wet winds of southeastern Alaska once more in his face, a man begins to forget about the Alaska Highway. And that is regrettable, for someone should keep booming the drums of publicity until the highway is in reality what it started out to be, a land link with the States. It should not be allowed to slip back, as the Alaska Railroad was, into the limbo of forgotten, mishandled and bedraggled projects. It should not be condemned to remain a severed limb hidden in the wilderness.

# NOVEMBER

AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

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| Juneau .................. | 35.7 | New York ............. | 44.4 |
| Anchorage ...... .. | 22.7 | St. Paul ...... ....... | 32.3 |
| Fairbanks .... ...... | 3.7 | Spokane .. ... ... .... | 37.7 |

In the eleventh month the Territory has once more slipped back into winter. Along the Tanana Valley the air becomes breathlessly still, and the mercury drops to the bottom of the tube. The light snow is poised delicately along the wires bordering the Alaska Highway, with never a breath of wind to topple it. The heater roars in the small bus making the Fairbanks-Whitehorse run, and the hot dry air hardly compensates for the frigid cold seeping through the flooring.

Valdez, at the foot of a glacier, is shoveling away at the endless snow falling upon the town. Anchorage watches Cook Inlet growing sluggish, while the farmers of the valley spend more time chinking the barn logs against the strong hand of the "Matanuska" wind.

The high-school kids of Ketchikan shiver in the line before the theater, their collars open to the bite of the wind. In the shacks around Juneau, Indian squaws pull dirty overcoats tighter about their shoulders and mumble maledictions against the wind and snow and rain through broken teeth.

In Barrow a young Eskimo boy signs up as a mechanic's helper with a New York City contracting firm, test drilling for the Navy. In Bethel an Alaska Airlines plane sideslips in a forty-mile-an-hour wind as it noses down for a landing. Along the Yukon the Indian families turn their backs on the river and head into the woods to their trap lines.

The cold settles on the land.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Little Dark Cousin:

## NOVEMBER AMONG THE NATIVES

ALASKA means Eskimos, walrus, blubber, chewing on urine-soaked skins, making little doodads from ivory, living in igloos, wearing parkas in the hot summer sun of New York's Fair, staging native dances in front of Kodaks and eight-millimeter cameras.

And to those who have not gone far beyond Jack London's exciting stories, Alaska means guttural Athapascan Indians slipping across an endless waste of snow on whispering snowshoes, spittle freezing in mid-air, and the long eerie howling of wolves in perpetual darkness.

Or maybe Alaska means Tlingit Indians and totem poles, beaded moccasins and old hags with pailsful of blueberries, little fat-faced babies with dark eyes, broad-beamed girls giggling outside a bakery window.

Whatever the word means for the casual visitor to the Territory it generally results in a curious stare, followed by a purchase of some trinkets, a snapping of a camera shutter. Then the visitor passes on to new sights and forgets the Indian or the Eskimo he has gawked at.

But if you're going to live in Alaska, you can't forget the Eskimos or the Aleuts or the Indians. You're going to live, not with them, but close by them. You will discover that Eskimos mean more than blubber-chewing and paragraphs in a school child's geography, and that Indians mean more than snowshoes and outlandish totem poles. For white people who live close by the natives, the dark-skinned ones

come to mean life or death all tied up in one dread word—tuberculosis.

Well-established Alaskans who look with uneasiness at the mounting tide of immigration should make sure the newcomers from the States are healthy and not susceptible to the white plague. The death rate from TB in Alaska is thirteen times that of the States.

Until late 1943, when a campaign was started against the disease, records were so poor that nothing much was known about the health situation in Alaska, except that it was bad. This lack of knowledge was not the fault of the hard-working and respected men heading the Department of Health at that time, but was entirely due to the absence of medical and nursing personnel in many large areas.

A graph showing the death rates from TB in the forty-eight states looks like a child's slide—going steadily down hill and touching an all-time low of forty-five for every 100,000 persons. In Alaska the same graph looks like the cruelly exaggerated teeth of a buzz saw. Between 1939 and the present it has leaped up and down from 516 to 346, to 318 and up again to 346, the present black mark on the graph.

Alaskans are quick to point out that the rate among the white population up north is only fifty-five for every 100,000, not too far out of line with the record in the States. Some will even whisper that the dread affliction seems to have a liking for dark skins over white ones. (In 1940 and 1941 alone, the death rate among the Eskimos was 846 per 100,000.) But the joker in the whites' claim of greater robustness, is the fact that once a white person has even the faintest suspicion that he has contracted the disease, he disappears overnight from the dampness and cold of the Territory and flies so fast to the assumed safety of the States that all track of him, so far as statistics go, is lost. Furthermore,

eliminate the nonwhite deaths in the States, and the persentage drops to thirty-six. Alaska's percentage of fifty-five for whites looks discouraging alongside of it.

The native population is either not financially able to fly south or else is indifferent to the news that life may be prolonged if one takes up residence in a land where the sun comes out hot and strong with little letup. Whatever the reason, the natives stick by the Territory and contract the disease at an appalling rate. Of the 32,458 Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts, nearly 4,000 are crippled by tuberculosis. The mere fact that the name "Indian" is tacked upon these unfortunate people is no reason for their affliction since the Indians of the States have only one-tenth the rate of those in Alaska.

What makes the situation even more serious is that since so many of the natives just curl up quietly and die without the benefit of a physician, the true rate of deaths from TB is probably much higher than that shown on the charts. Teachers of the native schools scattered throughout the Interior, who must at times assume the role of doctor along with numerous other duties, often have almost unbelievable stories to tell of five- and six-year-old hollow-eyed victims toddling to school, marked for death when they have scarcely begun to live.

The small pamphlet, *Alaska's Health,* issued monthly by the Department of Health, spreads the following facts upon the table: On the Arctic slope between Point Lay and the Canadian border practically every native family has at least one case of tuberculosis. The Eskimos are slow to accept nursing service and take their time about being willing to understand. Nearly ninety per cent of routine X rays taken of the natives in that region indicate the presence of TB. Babies are born sturdy and strong, but by their second year

they begin to show the symptoms, and when they get to school many of them have the disease.

When 164 Aleuts were evacuated from the chain down to a camp in southeastern Alaska in August of 1942, twenty of them died from tuberculosis within ten months.

Of the great numbers of natives rejected for military service during the war, twenty-four per cent had TB.

The native churches urge the victims to attend services and yet try to protect the others in the congregation. In one of the churches there is what is known as "Spitters' Row." Persons with active tuberculosis, who were previously barred from church because of their constant coughing, are now allowed to attend. They are obliged to occupy a sort of balcony pew in the rear, separated from the rest of the church by a glass partition. Sanitary metal sputum cups with waxed-paper liners are provided each patient, with his name printed on the cup. Kleenex is available as handkerchiefs. At this church a native girl, trained as a nurse's aide, is in attendance each Sunday to see that the instructions the patients have previously received are carried out. They must cover their mouths with Kleenex while coughing; they must expectorate into the paper cup in the metal holder and put the Kleenex in the cup. At the close of the service, each person removes the cup from the holder, carefully wraps it in a paper towel that is provided, and when leaving the church, puts the package into a coal-burning stove. These rules must be carried out or the person will not be allowed to attend church the next Sunday.

Some of the native communities enforce a rigid discipline over the sufferers, isolating them and prohibiting employment in the native stores of anyone with the disease.

In all of this, Alaska has a vitally important problem. "The public health needs in Alaska are not being effectively

met, and present facilities are inadequate to meet even the present, let alone the future, conditions, particularly in tuberculosis and environmental sanitation." TB in Alaska has always been bad, but when Dr. Carl Buck, Field Director of the American Public Health Service, and Dr. George Hays, Senior Surgeon of the United States Public Health Service, wrote these words in December 1943, they threw the spotlight for the first time on the growing stigma of Alaska's health.

It makes little difference whether it is the white grocer, the Indian fisherman, the Aleut fox trapper or the Eskimo ivory carver who has tuberculosis. The germs are there, and in a good many areas the people live side by side—especially so since Governor Gruening earnestly championed equal rights with no discrimination against the dark-skinned voters of the land. The good people of Philadelphia are frightened by the high incidence of tuberculosis among that city's Negro population. Now it is apparent that Alaskans are getting alarmed by the pest hole in their own Territory.

Despite the several hundred million acres of free land, the population of the Territory tends to be urban, fifty per cent of the people grouped in seventeen towns, ranging in population from 400 to 9,000. Newcomers to the Territory, instead of spreading out, are swelling the larger cities, so that the tuberculosis problem becomes increasingly difficult. Tuberculosis has never eradicated itself anywhere, and it will not do so in Alaska. The present condition of TB in the Territory will not be conquered until adequate plans and facilities are provided for its control.

The good showing in the States over the past fifty years has been credited to the discovery of a causative organism and modes of transmission on the one hand, and to an improvement in the standard of living on the other. Since Alaskan doctors have on their bookshelves all the accumu-

lated knowledge of the States, it must be that a faulty standard of living is the cause of the evil now existing among the natives of Alaska.

The *Daily Alaska Empire,* lashing out at a proposal whereby the Territory would match $250,000 with a like sum from the Federal Government for the purpose of hospitalizing tuberculosis cases, points out that real poverty (and the only poverty found in Alaska), exists among the natives for whom the Federal Government has long assumed a responsibility. It points to a survey made of a native village having seventy-nine houses for a total of 514 individuals with an annual income per house of $840 or $129 per person. It is not possible, the paper states bluntly, in Alaska, where living costs are high, to maintain health and decency on such an income. The direct cause of this poverty, concludes the *Empire,* is the failure of the Government to provide an adequate education for the natives.

Though this sounds bitter, it is all very natural in an area where Federal and Territorial duties are so hopelessly intermixed that one scarcely knows where one begins and the other leaves off. The tangible thing is that the natives, especially those who have tried to climb the back fences of the white communities, are not in a very happy position. Too many of them are content to sit in squalor about the fringes of the white towns like Juneau and Petersburg. Nothing is so pitiful as the sight of an old Indian "sidewheeler," an old squaw crippled first by her parents at birth, then later by tuberculosis of the bone. She comes sideways down the pavement, arms swinging, tongue clacking in the Tlingits' syllables—which sound as though the tongue were pushed hard against the teeth and the breath hissed out.

Some of the Indians live in miserable shacks set over the water, the men drunk and quarreling, brushing always with the law, and the young girls prey for everyone who

comes along. The Army and Navy discovered the Indian villages, and dozens of white men, barely out of their teens, have married the Indian girls. In peacetime a man who associated with an Indian woman was called a "squaw humper" and the word was used with contempt.

In one of the larger towns is the small wooden rectory of a church that caters solely to the Indians. A young white man is head of it. He and his kind-faced wife and three children have only been in Alaska a few months, and he does not pretend to have a deep knowledge of the natives. But he does say that his first impressions are completely unfavorable. The churchman lives right down in the Indian village, and his nights are broken by their drunken revelry. His conclusion is that they are simply no good. His life is dedicated to the eradication of evil among all classes of people, and yet he confesses that after seeing these native villages he comes away with a sense of depression. The men come in from fishing trips, gather their families to them for a drinking bout, and remain in an alcoholic stupor until the money is all gone. Family men with $300 in their pockets have been known to spend $200 of it on liquor before they finally stagger back to sobriety.

But the Indians have their champions too, people who have lived close to them, studied them, and come to appreciate their talents.

Edward L. Keithahn, in Juneau's Territorial Museum, is still young and vibrant, even though it is nearly twenty years since he first came to Alaska to become expert in his knowledge of the Alaska Indian and the Eskimos of Seward Peninsula. A man can go out among those people and teach them, and at the same time be taught himself. He can learn about Alaska from them, learn the skills of which they are capable, and become enthusiastic about their possibilities for further advancement. Keithahn has studied the Haidas, the

Tsimpsians, the Tlingits, the Athapascans, and all the varied tribes of the Eskimos. He is the one who tells the curious to look away from the scum fringe of natives bordering the white towns, and to go to the native villages where there is well-being, independence, industry, and even wealth. Towns like Metlakatla, Hydaburg, and Kasaan are communities where all the good points of the natives are brought to the fore. In those towns they own their own homes, their valuable fishing boats, their stores, and community buildings, and have reached a level many white communities would do well to imitate. But they know the danger of white encroachment and fight it.

Klawock is a little village of 400 or 500 Tlingit Indians. It was here in 1878 that the first pack of salmon was put up in Alaska, and the cannery is still the heart and center of the town. In Klawock is the little home of Mrs. Roseanne Roberts, a handsome stout woman of fifty-one, soft-voiced, with gleaming pretty eyes behind gold-rimmed glasses. It is a modest little home, painted white by the moist snows of November, is clean and respectable, and has running water, electric lights, and attractive furniture. A good place to raise children.

Mrs. Roberts is a widow. Her mother was a full-blooded Tlingit of the Wolf tribe; her father was an Austrian. She has been married thirty-five years. Her parents had opposed the marriage strongly since she was so young at the time—only fifteen. Marriage brought nine children, but there was love and understanding from her husband, himself the child of an Indian mother and a white father. While their children were very young her husband said to her, "For our children we can do either of two things—we can leave them a great deal of money and they will use it all up soon after we are dead. Or we can give them a good education which they will have always."

The children were given the chance to obtain all the education they desired. Four went to Washington State College and business college in Seattle; all of them went at least to high school, the Wrangell Institute, and the Sheldon Jackson School in Sitka.

In the summer Mrs. Roberts makes her living as a cutter in the cannery. During these winter months, with the cannery silent and life in the village slowed almost to a dead stop, she devotes a good deal of her time to the care of her youngest son, an invalid. All the older children have scattered and gone to homes of their own. Only a week ago she returned from a month's visit to a married daughter living in Seattle.

Mrs. Roberts is deeply religious. For the past five years she has been president and treasurer of the Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Klawock, acting as interpretor for the Presbyterian preacher who does not speak the language. It is amazing to see these people, all natives or with native blood, sitting down in their missionary circles, sewing clothes, contributing money that is sent into the central office in New York and from there to Africa and China and the needy of the world. Their grandfathers used to moisten the tips of community-house foundations with the living bodies of slaves.

In Klawock there is no liquor store. The natives govern themselves, and with all the means at their disposal they fight to keep liquor from entering the small town. They know the evil that follows in its wake. But it is not possible to stamp it out entirely. The village of Craig, a white settlement, is only five miles away, and Craig has the same percentage established by other white cities and villages in Alaska when it comes to liquor stores.

Someone mentions the great prevalence of tuberculosis among the Indians, and Mrs. Roberts nods in agreement.

"In Klawock," she says, "there is a time when we have very little of this sickness. Then the Government sends in as a school teacher a young full-blooded Indian girl who is coughing all the time. She is teaching little children, first grade and second grade, and she is coughing. Pretty soon it is hinted about she has tuberculosis, but there is nothing done. She coughs hard, and she has these little children running around and getting her paper cups for spitting, and these little children they pack these things around. They get infected and everyone of these children, they have tuberculosis today. Many of them are dead already. This thing is wrong. And we wonder why it is the Government allows this terrible thing to happen to these little children."

With 4,000 active cases of tuberculosis, and hospital beds for less than one-tenth that number; with the patients scattered from the Arctic slope to the extreme tip of the Panhandle, neither the Territorial Health Department nor the Office of Indian Affairs has the facilities or the employees to meet even the routine, let alone the emergency, needs. What is needed for getting around so vast an area are a couple of airplanes. What the Territory got was a boat.

The United States Children's Bureau provided $125,000 for a five-year program, which includes the operation of a sixty-five-foot motor ship called the *Hi Gene,* complete with a crew under Capt. Darrell Naish, Dr. Ann P. Kent, a physician, and two public health nurses. The vessel, equipped with an X-ray laboratory for examining suspected cases, patrols the waters of southeastern Alaska, and has contributed to the progress made in the fight against the disease.

In a recent six-weeks cruise to Kake, Klawock, Craig, Ketchikan, Hydaburg, Petersburg, and Skagway, the staff rendered services that included chest X rays for adults and children and tuberculin testing of children, immunization against communicable diseases, physical examinations of pre-

school and school children, baby clinics, treatments for venereal diseases, and sanitation inspections. To change the routine of pills and needles, nutrition lectures were given at Kake and Hydaburg.

The problem of personnel is a discouraging one in the Territorial Department of Health. There is an alarming turnover of professional personnel, particularly medical. Living costs in Alaska are much higher than in the States and the salaries are not attractive. Recently a medical officer employed by the Territory had the unique experience of seeing his son, a bellboy for the summer in one of the local hotels, earn more money than he did.

In the past, comely white daughters of Alaska who have been attracted to the nursing profession have acquired their training in the States, and almost none have returned to their native land. On the other hand, the 300 odd nurses who have been employed to come to the Territory have invariably worked for a short period, then succumbed to the urgent demands of the male population, married, and retired from their profession. The tremendous turnover in the nursing staffs and allied health agencies, with the Territory and Federal Government expending large sums in travel money, leaves a painful memory. The male element of Alaska has been securing some splendid wives, but the nursing problem has grown.

Some of the health officials are looking to the young native women of the land, speculating on their possible aptitude and inclination to become useful to themselves and to their race. Unless some stabilization is brought about in the white nursing situation, another new and very startling innovation in Alaskan health circles will occur—the employment of dark-skinned Tlingit and Athapascan girls as nurses to their ailing races.

So much publicity was given the health situation that the

legislative session in the winter and spring of 1945 passed a law creating a Department of Health, setting up a Board and appointing a full time commissioner at $10,000 a year. At the same time the Legislature appropriated $60,000 to be spent over a two-year period by the Health Department. If used for the tuberculosis patients alone, seven dollars and fifty cents would be expended each year for each sufferer.

Dr. C. Earl Albrecht was appointed Commissioner of Health for the Territory. That gentleman is so capable and so forthright that he is not willing to let matters run along in the same old course. Neither is he content with a $60,000-appropriation for so monumental a problem.

Doctor Albrecht's appointment was ratified by the Board in September of 1945. Within a week he was holding up the $60,000-appropriation between his thumb and forefinger for public scrutiny, and demanding, through the Board, that a special session of the Legislature be called in order to appropriate for one year $253,122, to be matched by a like amount of Federal money. (This was done in the Emergency Session of March, 1946.) Within a month the whole Territory was rocking and boiling with the tuberculosis question. It received more space in the newspapers in those thirty days than it had in the entire thirty years previous. Alaskan senators and congressmen, when asked about the need for the proposed special session of the Legislature, hemmed and hawed, sidestepped, bowed, and nodded, and generally came forth with answers calculated to please everybody.

House Member Almer Peterson of Anchorage did not sidestep the issue. Interviewed by the reporter of the *Anchorage Daily Times,* he said, "I don't believe all I hear. I say that either someone has been a liar for six years or someone is lying now. We lawmakers better talk this over among ourselves."

Representative Peterson's statement merely reflected the

views of a good many other honest Alaskans. Prior to the first startling report of Dr. Buck and Dr. Hays, late in 1943, tuberculosis was kept in the same dark closet that hid the social diseases. Dr. Albrecht came along and made it a topic for the dinner table.

In the eyes of the dyed-in-the-wool Alaskans, the Commissioner of Health is a rank newcomer on the Alaskan landscape. It is just ten years since he arrived as a young man of thirty to serve as the Superintendent of the Alaska Railroad Hospital in Anchorage. His history prior to that showed a wavering between the ministry and the medical profession, with the doctor finally compromising by mastering both.

After getting the feel of the country in the Railroad Hospital he planned to get out to the Kuskokwim Valley, and tend to the natives there as a medical missionary. However, his advent into Alaska coincided with that of the pioneers of Matanuska. Dr. Albrecht was the man who waved the stork into a landing in the 120 births recorded in the first two years of the valley. Behind him he left the Railroad Hospital and his plans for the Kuskokwim.

A man does good work in a highly-publicized site like Matanuska, and the word gets around. New jobs were added to the Doctor's daily routine, and his name became a familiar one in Alaskan medical circles. When the war came to Alaska, he was called in, given a uniform, made a Captain, and placed in charge as ward surgeon at the Station Hospital in Fort Richardson. He kept getting new uniforms and new ranks until by July of 1945 he was the Commanding Officer of the Station Hospital and a Lieutenant Colonel. A few days later he was given his release from the Army and took up his duties as Commissioner of Health. Given the backing of a sympathetic legislature, the doctor can do much to lift Alaska out of the health rut into which it has fallen, and from which, for a time, there seemed no escape.

With the ending of the war there are millions of dollars worth of abandoned Army and Navy hospital buildings and equipment throughout the Territory. Dr. Albrecht reasons that quick action by the Legislature will enable the Medical Board to round up this valuable equipment as fast as it is declared surplus and use it in the fight against tuberculosis.

No one in Alaska is quaking with fear over the tuberculosis rampant among the natives, just as few in the States are terrified by the high rate of syphilis among the nonwhites. Yet the calm acceptance of the fact in both cases does not lessen the evil. Up in Kotzebue, death for a young Eskimo boy of eighteen is just as hateful as it would be for the high-school cheer leader in Rochester.

# DECEMBER

## AVERAGE MEAN TEMPERATURES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Juneau | 30.6 | New York | 34.2 |
| Anchorage | 12 3 | St. Paul | 19.4 |
| Fairbanks | *–7.4* | Spokane | 30.9 |

In December the Alaska Steamship Company sends a red-faced Santa Claus on one of its boats, calling in the kids at each port, handing out candies and little cakes. On the return trip of the vessel, it is crowded with miners from the Interior heading out to Seattle and California, and with an assortment of all types of Alaskans, rushing back to the States to spend the holidays.

The Tanana Valley is gripped by temperatures that once gave rise to the stories of Jack London. Timbers in log cabins crack and groan in protest while red-bellied stoves fight endlessly against the cold.

Anchorage goes ice skating in the ball park and out on Lake Spenard, while outside Fairbanks the University students hike to the ski cabin and plummet down the runs.

In Juneau, as in all the Territory, darkness comes early and hunger comes quicker. The Bubble Room in the Baranof hotel fills earlier, as do the bars over at the Arctic and down at the City Cafe. The high-school "milk-shake" contingent takes over Percy's Cafe before and after the show in Gross' 20th Century, while the cars of the politicians clank down the steep streets, tire chains rattling against bumpers, until the clan is gathered in leathery comfort around the card tables of the Elks Club.

In the big, white, wooden mansion overlooking the Channel and the squalor of the Indian Village, the Governor chews a pen while he composes a report to the Secretary of the Interior.

All goes well with Alaska, so the Governor writes, even though the land is covered with snow, and the snow hidden in darkness. The Governor knows, far better than the Secretary of the Interior, that beneath the heavy mantle life in the Territory continues.

CHAPTER TWELVE

# New York-on-the-Channel:

## DECEMBER IN JUNEAU

THE RAYS of a bright December sun fall down through thin clouds on a nest of white mountains, and upon a maze of waters interlacing far below—waters that touch upon sandy beaches, white-faced rocks and the smooth trunks of dying spruce. The mountains rear straight up into the skies, pure white with snow, with here and there a patch of green where the trees have shaken off their mantle. Then the sun fades, the clouds gather around the mountain tops, and the new snow falls quietly and gently. This is December in Juneau, capital city of the Territory of Alaska.

Juneau is New York and Washington, D. C., Los Angeles, and Seattle all rolled into one. It has the bursting pride, the stately dignity, the fascination of mixed peoples, and the eager reaching after trade that respectively characterize those cities far to the South. One thousand miles north from the States, but only a whisper away when it comes to imitating the life that flows through the forty-eight whirlpools far below. But the life is its own—bright, fresh, and vigorous, full of the rain and the snow, the smell of fish from the cold-storage plant, and budding statesmen swinging in and out of the doors of the Federal Building.

There are 7,000 people here—not as many as at Anchorage, but more than at Fairbanks and more than at Ketchikan, the clamoring sister 250 miles to the South. But these 7,000 give the town a vital spirit all its own, a progressive air and concern for the future that far outweighs its numbers. There

is something wide-awake and alert about Juneau that impresses even the casual visitor, so that of this place more than any other in the Territory one hears the opinion, "This could be home."

This alertness comes, perhaps, from being closer to the States than most of the other towns stretched out to the Westward and in the Interior; or perhaps from the unending parade of ocean-going steamships thrusting inquisitive bows around the edge of the rock dump; perhaps from the giant airliners that come down at the airport at least twice a day, only six and a half hours out of Seattle.

Any town built beneath a mountain and confined to the water's edge, has a beauty all its own. Juneau is guarded by twin mountains, rounded humps of earth and rock that reach only 3,600 feet into the air but are so close and domineering that they have all the majesty of 15,000-foot peaks that are viewed from a distance. Then adding to the sense of imprisonment is the bulk of Douglas Island looming across the narrow Gastineau Channel. All three hang over the town, threatening it, embracing it, protecting it, so that Juneau is completely boxed in, with only the thread of waters—a narrow ribbon of escape for the ships that come to the city.

The mountains are glaciated, slick, smooth rock, with just a thin skin of topsoil on which the forests have thrown shallow roots. If the sun shines too long, the surface cracks. And when the heavy rains of southeastern Alaska come, they seep down to bedrock and nibble away at the soil's weak hold upon the rock. With enough nibbling the soil gives way, and there is a disastrous landslide. The banks will not lend money for homes to be built against the side of Mt. Roberts, and they point to the brown gash standing out prominently in the green and white of the mountain, running in a straight line down to the very street at its foot. In

the late thirties the mountain gave way above the town, came roaring down, and wiped out an entire row of buildings, bringing death to fifteen people. Today a new taxi office stands at the very foot of the slide mark, and the woman answering the phone at the desk sits on the very spot where a man died with the iron leg of a stove punched through his chest.

In December the world about Juneau is all white, with only the green waters and the dirty black of the wharf pilings for contrast. The snow comes often, but it is a welcome change from the rain. The streets become dirty and slushy, and the sidewalks are rutted channels of black and white, and the steep wooden walks climbing up the hillsides present a serious problem in navigation. But the country round about is wrapped in beauty. Never is Alaska so lovely as when fresh snow falls upon Juneau and the trees reach up a million arms to be enfolded.

In the morning, light blankets of mist hug close to the Channel and drape the town until the sun breaks through. Then the clouds lift and start to eddy upward, tracing light fingers upon the snow-covered forests. Underneath, the town stirs in the sun. It stirs and walks about the concreted streets and sidewalks of the business district (most of the concrete an innovation of the past fifteen years). It threads through the doors of the million-dollar Federal Building, built in the cheery days of Herbert Hoover, and brought to robust living the day the Democrats came riding in for an extended rule. Most of the town walks up to the second floor, where the thousands of copper and glass mailboxes are stuffed with white envelopes after the coming of each boat and plane. But there are many who work in the building.

Above all else, Juneau is the capital city of Alaska, and this Federal Building is its Capitol, its House Office Building, its Senate Office Building, its Smithsonian Institution, and

Library of Congress. The Federal agencies and the Territorial offices share uneasy space within the six-story structure. By the latest count, fifty-two Federal bureaus are jumbled in with a variety of struggling Alaskan departments, and the resulting confusion is prodigious.

They are strange bedfellows, these territorial offices and Federal agencies, and the cause of more than one caustic comment from the guardians of Alaskan integrity, the Territorial newspapers. Juneau's *Daily Alaska Empire* looked down its nose at the hodgepodge in the Federal Building and snorted, "Alaskans are ruled under a colonial form of government by carpet-bagging bureaucrats who are sent in from the 'Old Country' on political payoff deals, and they're mighty hard to dislodge once they arrive."

To be an Alaskan and deeply conscious of the noble freedoms granted by the abolition of taxation without representation presents a variety of strains. Every two years the Alaskans are permitted to vote for twenty-four representatives, eight of them coming from southeastern Alaska alone, the most populous part of the land. To the Territorial Senate for four-year terms, they send sixteen men, four from each of the districts in Alaska. They elect a delegate to Congress in Washington, D. C., a lone watchdog who can bark, but never bite, since he cannot vote. The Alaskans also elect a Treasurer, an Auditor, and an Attorney-General—and there they stop.

The President of the United States appoints a Governor to sit as top man over the entire Territory. That gentleman, whether he hails from Nome or was born and raised in Dallas, Texas, has a veto over any Territorial legislation. A man coming in from the "Outside," bursting with new hopes and ambitions for the Territory and not afraid of the newspaper editorials or the Alaskan politicians, is in for an exciting time. The present Governor, Ernest Gruening, is

referred to politely as "that damned New Yorker"—despite his Maine birthplace—and that phrase, toned down from the original, is indicative of the merry cat-and-dog fight Alaska witnessed in its last legislative session.

There was no attempt to keep the dirty linen hidden from the public eye. Names were called, fists flew, portly members rolled on the floor, and even the quiet dignity of a reception in the Governor's mansion was marred by a rowdy exchange of flailing arms. All kinds of people joined arms to make life interesting for "the damned New Yorker."

For the eight years following 1932, John W. Troy was Governor of the Territory, until ill health forced his resignation and he was succeeded by Gruening. Troy was an Alaskan. He was a very old and, in the last years of his service, a very feeble man. Out of respect for him, things were pretty quiet in the Territory all during his term of office. But when Gruening burst upon the scene, a Democratic appointee by the greatest Democrat of all, Franklin D. Roosevelt, his sharpest-toothed critic was the *Daily Alaska Empire,* a Democratic paper owned by none other than Helen Troy Monsen, daughter of the former Governor. When the *Empire* gets into a really towering rage it invariably trots out, as a reminder to the Governor, the fact that half the members of the Senate signed a petition to President Truman, asking for his recall.

Gruening is fifty-eight, chunky, wide shouldered, and used to battling any issue through to a successful conclusion. As yet he hasn't shown any signs of wilting under the attacks of his critics. Luckily for his peace of mind, the Territorial Legislature meets for a sixty-day session only once every two years. The battle is furious while it lasts, and the entire land is entertained with the artillery and mortar fire in the Federal Building, but sixty days can't last forever. And when the

air around Juneau gets too hot to breathe, the Governor can always fly south to Washington for consultation.

The fifty-two Federal bureaus are over and above and very remote from all such nonsense. They represent not the 80,000 Alaskans but the 140,000,000 Americans whose grandfathers originally bought the land from the Russians back in 1867 and who still hang on grimly to 97 per cent of the land and water and 100 per cent of the sky.

It was Gruening who was responsible for doubling the representation from each of the districts, thereby greatly increasing the membership of the House and Senate. This was good if for no other reason than that it brought a lot of new faces to the sixty-day scramble of the sitting of the Legislature. One of these newcomers was young Curt Shattuck of Juneau, an exception to the rule that second-generation white Alaskans rarely stick with the country. Curt held down a seat in the House, on occasions rising to flourish the furniture in the face of anything threatening the Territory's well-being, while his father still occupied an honored chair in the Senate. When the sound of gunfire had ebbed away, both Shattucks retired to their real-estate office in Juneau, only a stone's throw from the Federal Building and a good place to keep an eye on Gruening during the 670 days when the Legislature was not sitting.

And still the snow comes down. It drifts upon the business district, where the drugstores crowd lower Franklin Street along with the clothing stores, the two banks and the two theaters, bursting with pride and splendor (but still unable to get films until they are musty with age). It falls and is reflected prettily in the cherry red of the whiskey bottles in the liquor stores that are sprinkled like leaves throughout the town.

The snow comes down softly and casts a pure white man-

tle over the modest homes and on the ornate ones up the hillside overlooking the Channel. It piles up on the eaves of the bold cluster of hothouses down at the lower end of town where hags grown old before their time used to come out and pluck at one's sleeve and whisper, "Come on in. I've got something new."

The snow settles over the amazing bulk of the $19,000,000-mill of the Alaska-Juneau Gold Mine, which is within the city limits and is the largest hard-rock gold mine in the continent. The mill is a huge factory of roaring machines flattened and pushed at a crazy angle against the steep sides of the mountain. For nearly twenty-five years the rumble and roar of the gold mill were never stilled as it chewed upon the 10,000 tons of rock that poured in daily from the thirty-three miles of tunnel beneath Mt. Roberts. Day and night without ceasing the waste rock clattered down the hillside, with a strange lull only on the Fourth of July and Christmas. Over these twenty-five years, $90,000,000 in gold were taken from the mountain. A thousand miners brought home pay checks to a thousand families. But always there was the dread thought in the town, "If the mine should go, Juneau will go with it, and we will become as other ghost towns, with only memories walking the streets."

Yet the mine did go. The war took away vast quantities of its iron and steel and spirited away the thousand men to mysterious islands—or to war wages that were not so mysterious. Those who remained asked for wages in keeping with those who were working on the military projects, and when the increase was not granted, the mine and mill shut down. Now only a small group of watchmen patrol the underground and the mill, watching the pumps and listening to the water dripping from the rocks and running in tiny rivulets down the wooden sluice boxes.

The mine died temporarily, and the rumble and roar

of the waste rock upon the hillside ceased, yet the town did not die. It surged into greater activity than before. The thousand miners drifted away, but in their places came 10,000 men in khaki and 10,000 men in navy blue, and the town boomed. The apartment houses were filled; private homes crammed in, one here, one there; the hotels became rulers of men's destinies, telling them where they could sleep and when. The old girls at the wrong end of town grew arrogant and no longer pleading. They wandered uptown to the swanky clothing stores, and the smiling managers bowed and brought out their $100 hats and their $1,000 fur coats.

In the days of the rumble and roar, when the sun rose and the rain poured down upon the mine and its flowing gold, only one person in fifteen held a stiff blue government pay-roll check when he walked at night back to his apartment on the hill or to his little wooden house overlooking the Channel. But with the coming of the military and the ending of the mine, the numbers on the government pay roll swelled beyond count. Over a twenty-five-year period, the mine could take out $90,000,000 in gold; the Government, if it were so minded, could spend that much money in one month.

Now the town looks uneasily to the silent gray ghost on the side of the mountain. With the ending of the turmoil and the gradual departure of the military, with the disappearance of the sleek ships and the blue uniforms, the town must look again for its living to the Federal Building, the fishing fleet, the cold-storage plant, and the lumber mill. And the eyes of Juneau always lift to the silent gold mill.

In the spring of 1946 the mill completed its second year of inactivity, and there was then no sign of reopening. But the stock listed on the New York Exchange reflected some of the fever infecting the world, for it shot up to its highest level in nine years.

The town has some better-than-average tourist shops,

notably the Nugget Shop, where the Simpson family has reaped a fine harvest through the years. Recently, owl-faced credit man, real estate man, and home builder Charley Waynor has bought a machine shop down by the Alaska Steamship docks and stuffed the place full of ivory, making vigorous efforts to snare every dollar coming off the tourist ships that dock at his doorstep. The Simpsons aren't wilting at the challenge. They have more than a friendly interest in the bus line that hauls the tourists out to Mendenhall Glacier, then back to town and deposits them right at the open door of the Nugget Shop. Things happen so quickly to the tourists who make the bus trip that they leave with the impression that the capital city is bounded on the north by the glacier and on the south by the Nugget Shop, with nothing in between.

There are a half-dozen other places catering to the tourists during the season and supplying the needs of the town during the rest of the nine months. One of these is Ordway's Photo Service where the staff labors to meet the insatiable demand of the round-trippers for eight-by-ten colored enlargements of Mendenhall Glacier, and pictures of the boat they have traveled on. About 30,000 living rooms throughout the States are brightened by a ship picture bearing Ordway's copyright.

It is just about twenty years since Laura Ordway left Denver, Colorado, and went up to Juneau. The town was small, with less than half its present population of 7,000, but her daily routine before a typewriter and filing cabinet in the Bureau of Public Roads was no different from what she had been doing in Denver. Eat, work, sleep, a bit of entertainment—what else?

Something she couldn't have done in the States was to meet Fred Ordway, a tall, lanky photographer so full of life and ambition that he threatened to jump out of his shoes.

He was not just a good photographer, he was a genius with the camera. Before long Laura knew the difference between a lens and a tripod; she could do her own enlarging, and she was better than Fred when it came to coloring. Naturally she married him—and was very happy in the process.

Together they built up one of the finest photographic businesses in the country. Fred was bursting with ideas, and Laura saw to it that he carried them through. He had visions about Alaska that knew no bounds, and she was busy all the time making sure that the visions didn't grow dim.

Then he was killed in a plane crash.

You'd think a woman, living alone in a raw country, shocked by a terrific blow, would give up. Not Laura Ordway. She flew with Fred's ashes and scattered them over Mendenhall Glacier, then she came down and plunged into the business.

She brought it through the strangling restrictions of the war, the terrific problems of obtaining clerks and photographers, and unprecedented demands made upon her own services. Today the business is greater than ever before and is housed in Juneau's newest and smartest building. Perhaps that is something Alaska gives to a woman—determination.

But Laura differs most from women in the States in that she's been so busy, she hasn't had a chance to enjoy herself. Even her infrequent business trips outside have been all work with little time for hurried visits to Denver. Her smart, comfortable apartment is immediately above the shop, and at all hours of the day and night she is running down to take care of odds and ends. Now that more help is available, she's beginning to slack off. Yet even now, if one spends a quiet Sunday afternoon with her, she will have a drawing board propped upon her lap, coloring a rush order of pictures.

In Juneau there is the half-million-dollar Baranof Hotel. Now, to build a costly hotel in a town of 7,000 is an odd

thing. A half million dollars' worth of steel and concrete and brick will raise a building that would grace any of the streets of Seattle, and compare favorably with the smaller exclusive hotels in almost any resort in the States.

The Baranof is an immense thing, and in every way beyond comparison with any other hotel in Alaska. The sight of so many rooms and so many beds caused a scratching of heads back in 1939 when the Baranof was opened. The old guard proclaimed it a white elephant and waited hopefully for the handsome chrome fittings to dull and the shining maple furniture to warp and fall apart from disuse. A man who has grown used to sitting in a comfortable leather chair with a spittoon by his side, looking out through dusty windows at the passing people, is quick to condemn such an innovation and mourn that the old Alaska is being ruined by a group of hustling, get-rich-quick boys.

Yet these get-rich-quick artists are Alaskans to the core, if vision and faith in a country make a man an Alaskan. Wallis George and Joe Meherin are men who look beyond the present day to the future. Even rich men cannot long afford to be foolish, and they were certainly not fools when they built the Baranof. They gambled on something the critics were willing to condemn before the first concrete form was built on the vacant lot next to the old Elks Building. They gambled and won.

The hotel was crowded from the day it was completed, and the glut of people swarming into the Territory with the coming of the war overflowed it. Those builders had not seen the coming of the war, but they had seen the first cautious experimental flights of Pan American up from Seattle to the capital city. They knew the air was to be the salvation of the land, that planes would make countless red lines across the map of Alaska, that those lines must of necessity feed into Juneau, main entrance to the Territory from the Pacific

Northwest. They knew the day would come when the 36,000 tourists would triple and eventually become ten times that number as the States seized upon Alaska as a natural vacation land.

It takes courage to anticipate a need and prepare for it before the need is pressing. George and Meherin worked on the theory that will eventually open up the Territory and lift it to the heights for which it has been groping since the turn of the century—to create the facilities for living and enjoyment, even before the need becomes a screaming necessity. You cannot let a thousand people fight their way up a stream to see some majestic glacier and then wait complacently while some place is found to shelter them. You build the shelter first, open up a road, and the people will come to see your glacier.

Men like George and Meherin can pick up the dry statistics of the *Foreign Commerce Weekly* and transport them into fascinating pictures. They can read that Canada was enriched yearly by $112,000,000 spent by tourists from the United States. They can ponder on those figures, and immediately their minds leap to the possibilities for Alaska, which is far more attractive to the vacation-hungry Americans than Canada.

In the years prior to the war, many a vacationist was forced to cancel plans for an Alaskan trip since the journey by boat from Seattle to Juneau and Skagway alone ran into three or four days each way. Today a person leaves Seattle at nine o'clock in the morning and is stepping off at the airport outside Juneau at two-forty in the afternoon. Fairbanks is four and one-half hours beyond. If he leaves Los Angeles at one in the morning, before twenty-three hours have elapsed a tourist can be standing on the beaches of Nome. The whole Territory has been condensed into an incredibly small time-space.

Those $112,000,000 are no longer a dish of delight solely for Canada. Alaska, with men of vision guiding her, is reaching out for her share, anxious to give more than a dollar's worth of magnificent scenery and recreation for every dollar spent. There will be a few who will make fortunes out of the tourists; there will be hundreds and thousands who will draw comfortable livings from them.

The small craftsman, the man who can make things with his hands, will come into his own. And to him the tourist business will not be a five-month rush from May through September, but a year-long time of preparation for the $112,000,000-trade.

Cabinet makers and furniture makers, men who can take a piece of raw timber and mold it into a thing of beauty, can make use of the natural woods sprawling in countless stands within walking distance of any point of the southeastern coastline. Artists in design can take a chunk of cedar and create something to grace the homes of the nation. These men can follow the lead of the Russians of a century before when they shipped Alaska's cedar to the Orient and there had it made into aromatic chests. Only it will be in Alaska rather than the Orient that the craftsman will do his designing and his carving.

Someone might even start in a small way to capitalize upon the "North Pole" and "Santa Claus" theme, and build up a toy industry. "Made in Alaska" has more attraction than "Made in Japan," and a solid living has been pulled from lesser attractions.

Men with a bent for minerals can wander by the foot of the glaciers and the graveled beds of age-old streams, gathering raw specimens of jade, pyrite, malachite, azurite, galena, garnet, fossil, coral, and copper nuggets, polishing them, mounting them, and turning them over to others to spread before the eyes of the tourists.

These creative men can work in a small way, devising an endless array of beauty for the jewelry trade, carving on jade and ivory and gold, and turning out novelties, pins, brooches and bracelets from the colorful shells strewn about Alaskan beaches. This may seem a little thing, the creation of a string of beads or a fanciful ornament, but 50,000,000 women seem always to crave them.

These would be minor industries but exciting openings for skilled craftsmen willing to start in a modest way, knowing that riches cannot always be counted in dollars, but sometimes in solid living in the midst of the most gorgeous beauty God has ever let loose upon the world.

Juneau, along with the rest of the Territory, is in a very jittery state wondering what will be the outcome of all the hubbub about postwar immigration by veterans and other hopeful people.

If Alaska had its way, every immigrant would be a potential Jim Hill, a George Westinghouse, or a Weyerhaeuser. They want people to come up there who will spend young fortunes gambling on the creation of larger fortunes. But the plain truth of the matter is that big money is definitely cool toward the Territory. The Federal Government has acted as such an efficient watchdog over our natural resources in the Northland that big business has said, in effect, "Brother, you can take Alaska and stick it down your throat."

Therefore, the tide of Alaskan immigration will continue to be made up of people who are looking for a roof over their heads, and three meals a day on the table. Not that the need for shelter and eating eliminates a man from the potential-tycoon class. Alaska has its bank clerks who married the bosses' daughters and eventually became the bankers in turn. It has its young fellows who wandered into town unheralded and unsung, and who, within a few years managed to get hold of a lumber company, float a Building and Loan

Society, and get a tight hold on the local building industry. It has men, now grown old, who came from obscure towns in Western states to fill minor civil service jobs, who, in an odd moment, ran for political office, and by a lucky accident were labeled Democrats just at the beginning of a sixteen-year reign. Sixteen uninterrupted years at a solid salary makes a man a tycoon in any land.

Not all the leading lights have come into the eminent class through a hard battle with nature. Cap Lathrop, a Fairbanks millionaire, is one of the few who belong in the pages of adventure books and rode to riches through spectacular achievements. Many of the others married into their positions, or got voted into them, or applied their talents at a lucky turn of events, or, more prosaically, worked their fingers to the bone, day after day and year after year, to attain their present status in life.

Government backing for veterans may make a difference, but it is safe to say a good deal of the immigration will follow the pattern of the period between 1930 and 1938. A young man by the name of Bob Parker would be typical of the slow tide that flowed over the Territory during those years.

Bob was born in Virginia. At twenty-three he found himself on the forward deck of a steamship rounding the rock dump sheltering the harbor of Juneau. There was no reason for his coming to Alaska except that the world in the States, in 1935, had grown sour. He had spanned the width of the country, come into Seattle, smelled the water, and seen the ships. He had washed dishes in a hotel and somehow managed to get together the twenty-three dollars necessary for a steerage ticket to Juneau.

The Territory knew of the coming of Bob and hundreds like him, and all over Alaska there were Chamber of Commerce meetings and angry protests that Seattle and the States

were sending up their offal to spread over the Territory. The world in the north had changed. At the turn of the century a man came into the new land and was somehow assimilated. No one counted the dollars in his pocket, there was no grave speculation on the job he was to fill, no long-winded debate on the probable swelling of the public-charity rolls. A man came and he was absorbed into the country or else the country overcame him. That was in the old days.

Now the incoming boats were met by well-dressed worried men, backed up by the town marshal. Questions were asked and there were men to block egress from the gangplank. To be sure, California was doing the same, but this was Alaska.

Yet a man who will starve his way across the width of a nation and fight his way into the questionable quarters of the steerage and share space with Filipino cannery workers will not be balked by a little knot of men standing by a gangplank. These were men of affairs, Alaskans who lived in the memory of hardships and gloried in their own beginnings in the Territory. Men of affairs—and the liquor-store trade was waiting, the ladies were impatient at the dress-goods counters, and letters were lying unopened in the Territorial offices. Men of affairs cannot stand forever by a gangplank, and even marshals tire of duty.

Three hours pass, and a boat whistle blares a half-hour warning, and the new passengers stream aboard to be hurried off to the Westward. There is a moment when vigilance is slackened. Parker throws a blanket roll over his shoulders, grasps a duffle bag tight in his hand, and is off the ship before the watchers have time to return.

He finds a place to sleep that night, bedded down in an old shack stuffed with hawsers close by the docks. Only the pain in his belly rings out with the advent of his coming to the new land. A month of dishwashing and he begins to be

sure of himself. Other men had come upon the Territory with greater fanfare and wider acclaim, well-dressed, and in the best accommodations these ships had to offer. And those same men often crowded the court calendars within a year's time—shysters, bigamists, and small-time crooks come to make suckers out of the raw land. Bob Parker slipped in the back door when no one was looking, but once in he furnishes no copy for the newspapers.

His name goes up in the window of the mine office, and he is given a slip of paper telling him to report to a shifter deep within the mountain. There are few men coming to the town who do not at some time follow the flood of gold-bearing rock coming out of Mt. Roberts.

Say "thirty-three miles of tunnel" and the figures are dim. The only things sharp and clear are the wet gleaming walls of bare rock, shining tracks, roaring ore trains, and overhead a thin copper wire carrying life to ore trains and death to the unwary who reach out a careless hand. There is nothing dim about plunging down 1,000 feet on a wooden-floored skip, ears ringing with warning whistles, body cringing beneath muffled blasts from bulldoze chambers, eyes smarting from the fresh stench of exploded powder. Then there is the sight of sudden death when a rock falls from the roof of a vaulted chamber and mangles the bodies of two men with whom one has been talking just seconds before. Fourteen men are killed in fewer months, and each death is sudden and spectacular, and each time the mind is stabbed with fear. But every day means money earned and the fear is accepted, for dollars come first in a man's living.

Food and gold never come easily. If gold were not tight-locked, then it would cease to be desired. The precious mineral is sometimes just the necessity of digging and clawing and scratching at the secrets of nature, battling, chewing on rock, blasting it, kicking it, and throwing roaring machines

against it with long steel fingers. Blasting it, making bare rock walls melt away into smaller boulders, sending these to crash down 400-foot chutes into the loading platforms, into the ore trains, and on to the distant mill.

Iron jaws close on the battered cars and topple them, and the rock falls into crushers, entering at the top of the mill and cascading from floor to floor, at each one pummelled and shaken and chewed, until the rock has vanished and only pebbles remain. Then the pebbles are gone, and the rubble is coarse sand and a thin yellow streak that moves to one side of the mammoth shaker tables. Twice each shift a man flushes down the heavy-laden boxes with a water hose, and the yellow metal disappears into the amalgamator's retort, to emerge in golden bricks. Ninety million dollars' worth.

Out of the stream of gold, five dollars and eighty-five cents is paid to Parker each day, and increases come regularly. Clean-cut, well-dressed, and mindful that too free a use of liquor in a small town like Juneau will hopelessly mark a man, Bob begins to look about. There is dancing in the large wooden hall of the Elks Club, with a band of sorts, and the company of women—women of all kinds, but well-dressed, pretty, vivacious.

If there is any snobbishness in the town where rich and poor must necessarily live side by side under the threat of Mt. Roberts, it is confined solely to a few sons and daughters who forget the lives their parents led and the fierce struggles that went into the making of the money. For the most part life is lived in an easy democracy and the resulting marriages are either a joy or a horror, depending on whether one is a perplexed parent or an exultant bridegroom with an eye cocked to the clothing store, the bank, or the flourishing barber shop.

There are girls who come from the States, for the lure of Alaska recognizes no sex. They take jobs as waitresses, as

stenographers in the offices of the Federal Building, as reception clerks in the airlines' offices. They are quick to laugh, quick to share excitement in a dancing skiff when a salmon battles at the end of a light line, quick to climb Mt. Roberts and Mt. Juneau, right to the rocky crest of the ridge. They will sit with a man upon the very roof of the world and look out upon the town and the vast expanse of southeastern Alaska spread out in winding waters and tree-covered islands, while a thin veil of clouds drifts 1,000 feet below.

Among women like these—from California and Pennsylvania, from Washington and Michigan—Bob Parker found someone to whom marriage meant Alaska and a home and babies born in St. Anne's hospital overlooking the Channel.

With the coming of the war, Parker left his fourteen-dollar-a-day-and-bonus job underground in the mine and took his wife and baby over to one of the small islands nearby where the Navy was frantically throwing up a base. There were huge underground rooms to be clawed out of the mountain for the storing of ammunition, and Parker, with the skills he had learned in the Alaska-Juneau, worked ten hours a day, seven days a week. And each month there was a pay check for $700.

Afterwards he sent his wife and baby back to Juneau while he went up to Dutch Harbor and worked on the base in those blighted regions. When he returned to southeastern Alaska after the passing of a year, he worked with the engineers in the multitude of projects for which the Government was pouring out money. When the ebb tide of the military set in, Bob, along with several of his friends, purchased pieces of ground and then bid on the mountain heap of abandoned army material. Pooling their knowledge, they started to build small houses. When peace was full upon the Territory, they discovered to their amazement that through some strange metamorphosis, they had become building contractors. So,

with tools in their hands and nails gripped between their teeth, they kept hammering and sawing, wondering what this new era in Alaska would mean to them. Unlike the chambers of commerce, they didn't worry about the influx of newcomers. They kept on hammering.

There is nothing spectacular about Bob's married life except that he and the girl from Michigan are among the small percentage who drift into the Territory and stay with it. There are plenty who come north to Alaska, but their numbers are almost equaled by those who leave again. Alaska has an attraction for Bob and the girl that makes the Territory seem to them the most desirable place in the world. In the spring and summer they can climb into a car and go twenty miles out the road to Tee Harbor and shove out in a skiff for a battle with the incoming salmon. They can hike miles and miles into the wilderness along the old Salmon Creek trail, and if their eyes are sharp they can see an old black bear bounce away, frightened, into deeper thickets. In the month of December they can go over to Douglas Island and climb three miles to the head of the ski run, nearly breaking their backs at awkward attempts on the long, thin slats.

On a Sunday afternoon Bob can sit down with a pipe and listen to KINY try its hand at rebroadcasting a football game sent in by telegraph from the States. It's a great game. The announcer at the mike is trembling with emotion, a turntable with a recording of cheering noises on one side, and one with band music on the other. He speaks in a high-pitched, excited voice, yelping and storming as though right before him was the gridiron instead of a bundle of telegraph slips. It is good acting, and for the first time, everyone is fooled.

The mountains hemming in the town bar good reception from the States, and Juneau must rely on these cooked-up synthetics from the local station. And Juneau loves the

nonsense. It all started ten years ago when a yellow-haired kid, Bud Foster, was chauffeuring a truck on the new bridge fill. He walked into the radio station and told the manager he could put on a synthetic football game that would knock the town cold. He was right. From Juneau, Foster went to manage KFAR, Cap Lathrop's station newly opened in Fairbanks. Then he was lost track of for a year or two, although rumors had it he'd gone big time in radio. One Easter morning in the States, a high-pitched excited voice came over the air waves, "Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Bud Foster speaking from Admiral Nimitz' flagship during this initial landing on Okinawa!"

Take Bob Parker and bring him into the country flat broke, and ten years later he has his home out in the Waynor Tract and the girl whose trail started in Michigan and two children born to the country—and the Territory is enriched. This is no success story, for at the end of the ten years there is still work that must be done for a living. Nothing startling has been accomplished, and the figures in the bank book are not impressive, but the home is there, and the roots are deep in the ground.

You cannot cull over your immigrants carefully and painstakingly. You cannot say, "You come to Alaska, you stay away." You cannot insist on immigrants with thousands of dollars in their pockets, for men with a firm foothold in the States are not interested in the Northland except for pleasure visits.

People who want to tear out old roots and plant new ones in a strange land will come regardless of any legislation, or warning or dire predictions. Americans have been marching restlessly for more than three centuries, and they will not cease marching because some chamber of commerce is fearful the relief rolls will swell. California tried to stem the tide of

migrants from the drought areas, and then within a few years was pleading with these same restless ones to come build her ships and airplanes, to harvest her crops and sow seed in the waiting land. There is no stilling this restlessness.

Neither Governor Gruening nor anyone else wants to encourage a wave of shiftless ne'er-do-wells into the virgin Territory of Alaska; no one would consciously hold out delusions of riches to those who wait outside the gates. But if the ne'er-do-wells and the foolish seekers after nonexistent wealth want to storm the gates, there is no stopping them. In the days of 1898, the disappointed ones were in such a hurry to get out of the country they walked 500 miles along the frozen Yukon from Dawson to Whitehorse, heading for salt water and a boat to Seattle. In these modern times, the ones who sicken of the country will not pine away on relief rolls, but will fight, claw, kick, scratch, and swim their way out of the forbidding land. The country will beat down the worthless ones so quickly that they will not be on the scene long enough to present a problem.

One can only stand back and watch in wonder, knowing that good immigrants will come with the bad. In the flood will come the failures, the criminals, the mildly insane, and the confirmed paupers, but far outnumbering them will be the Bob Parkers and the girls from Michigan.

Where is the man who will analyze the tide of migration that built up the West and come up with the triumphant conclusion, "These were all good people, honest, hard-working people, the very salt of the earth"? Even in 1850, the man who ripped his family from the good soil of Illinois and headed westward, bag and baggage, was often branded a shiftless fool. Perhaps he was, but Washington is today a great state, and California and Oregon, too. Perhaps they were fools, who rushed where living was a gamble, where starvation and cannibalism on the trail were hard facts, where the

land was a wilderness, where there were no roads but wagon trails, and these often a mockery; but they kept coming.

They were not fools, only Americans, eternally restless.

For every generation has its own uneasiness. In some it is stilled by war and bloodletting and violent living. In others it is quieted by a word spoken to a woman, a gathering of children and the small bundle of possessions, a last glance back to the well-ordered scheme of living, and a firm foot forward into the distant land of the future.

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