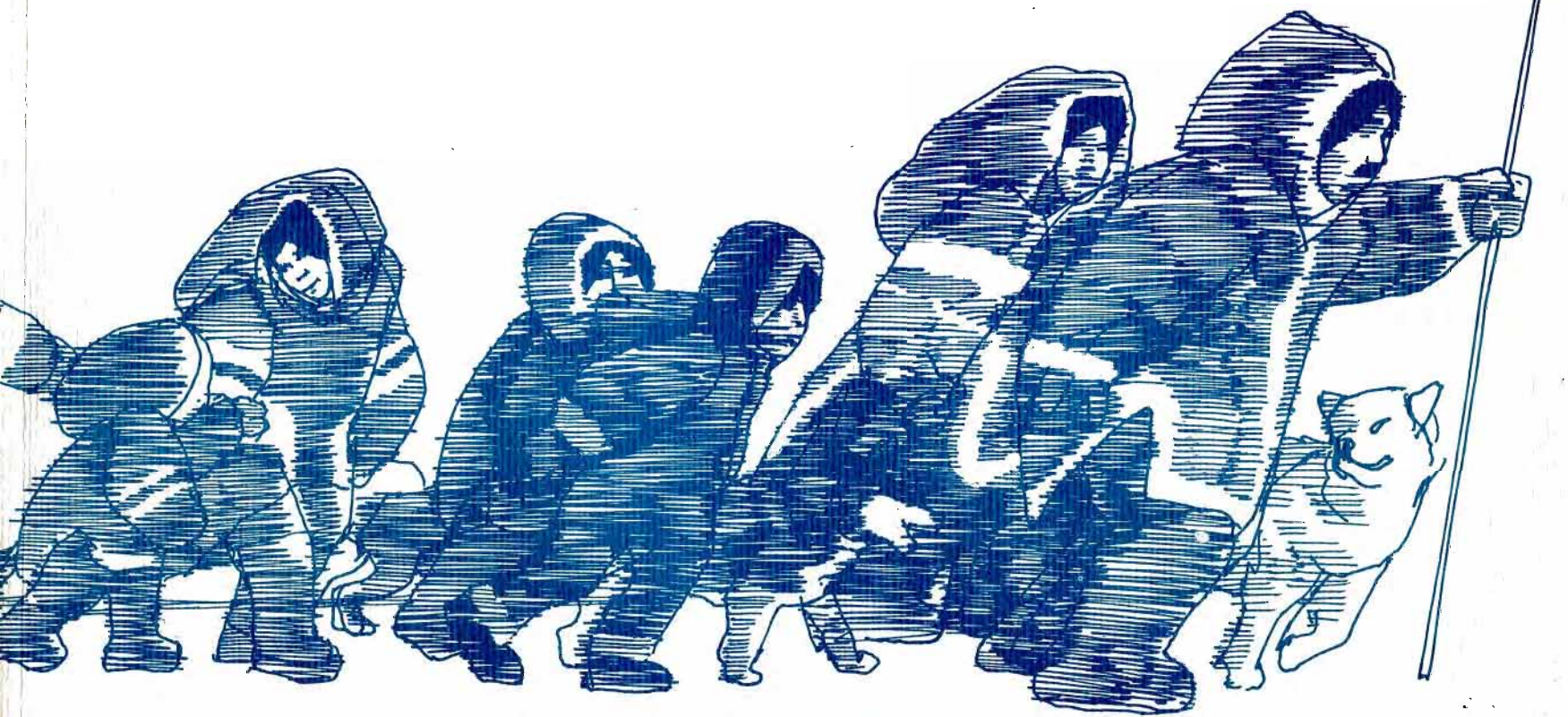


A Journey to the Arctic



Man: A Course of Study

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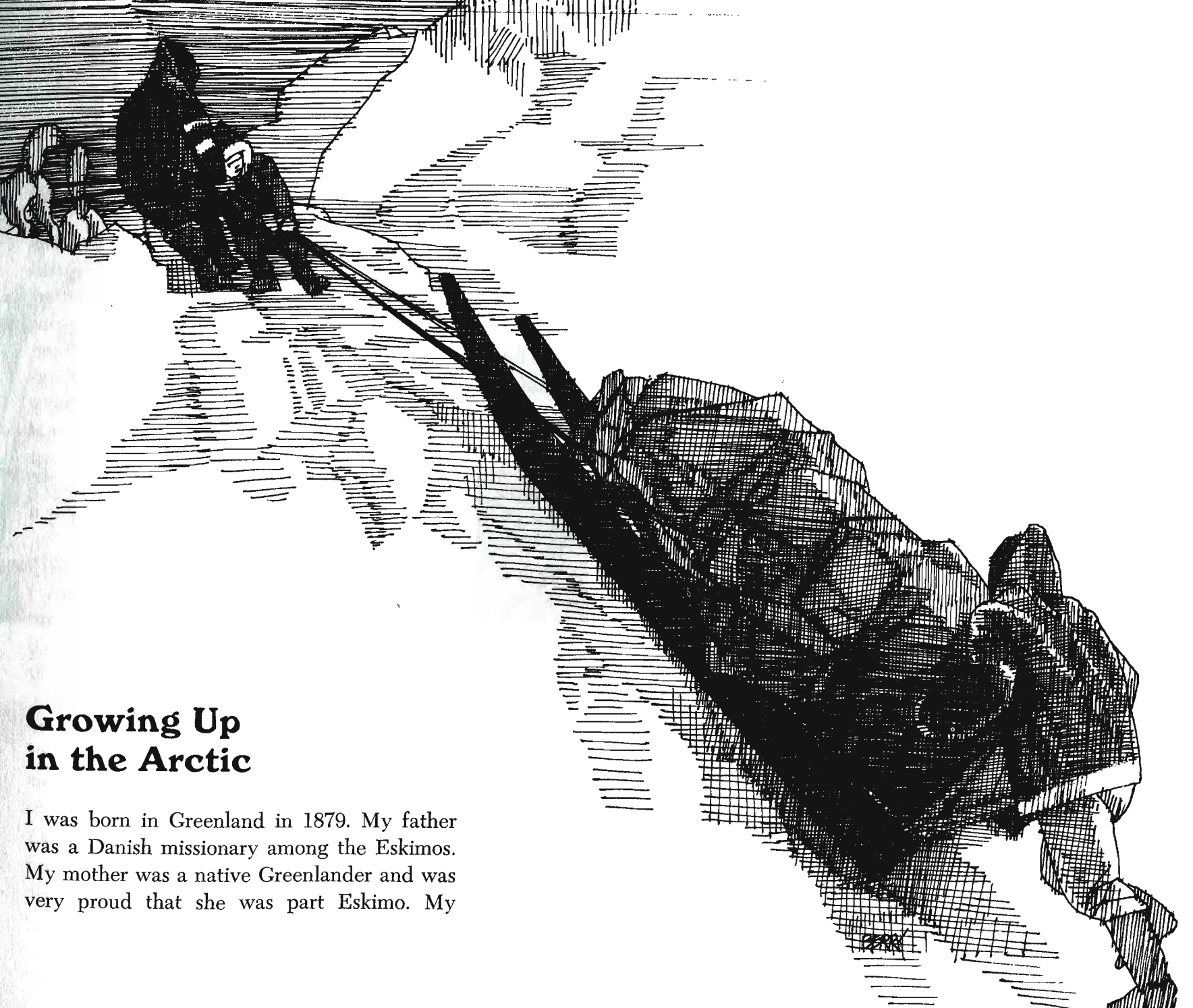
A Journey to the Arctic

Adapted from THE NETSILIK ESKIMOS by Knud Rasmussen

Illustrated by William A. Berry

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Growing Up in the Arctic

I was born in Greenland in 1879. My father was a Danish missionary among the Eskimos. My mother was a native Greenlander and was very proud that she was part Eskimo. My

childhood playmates, too, were native Greenlanders. From them I learned to speak the Eskimo language as my native tongue.

Everything in my life led me toward Arctic exploration. As a youngster I learned the skills needed for polar work — skills that other people find very hard to learn. I was eight years old when I drove my own team of dogs, and at ten I had a rifle of my own. From earliest boyhood, I played and worked with the hunters, so long sled trips became pleasant routine for me. All of this prepared me for the hardships of travel and work in the Arctic. Because of this, my later expeditions were happy reminders of my childhood.

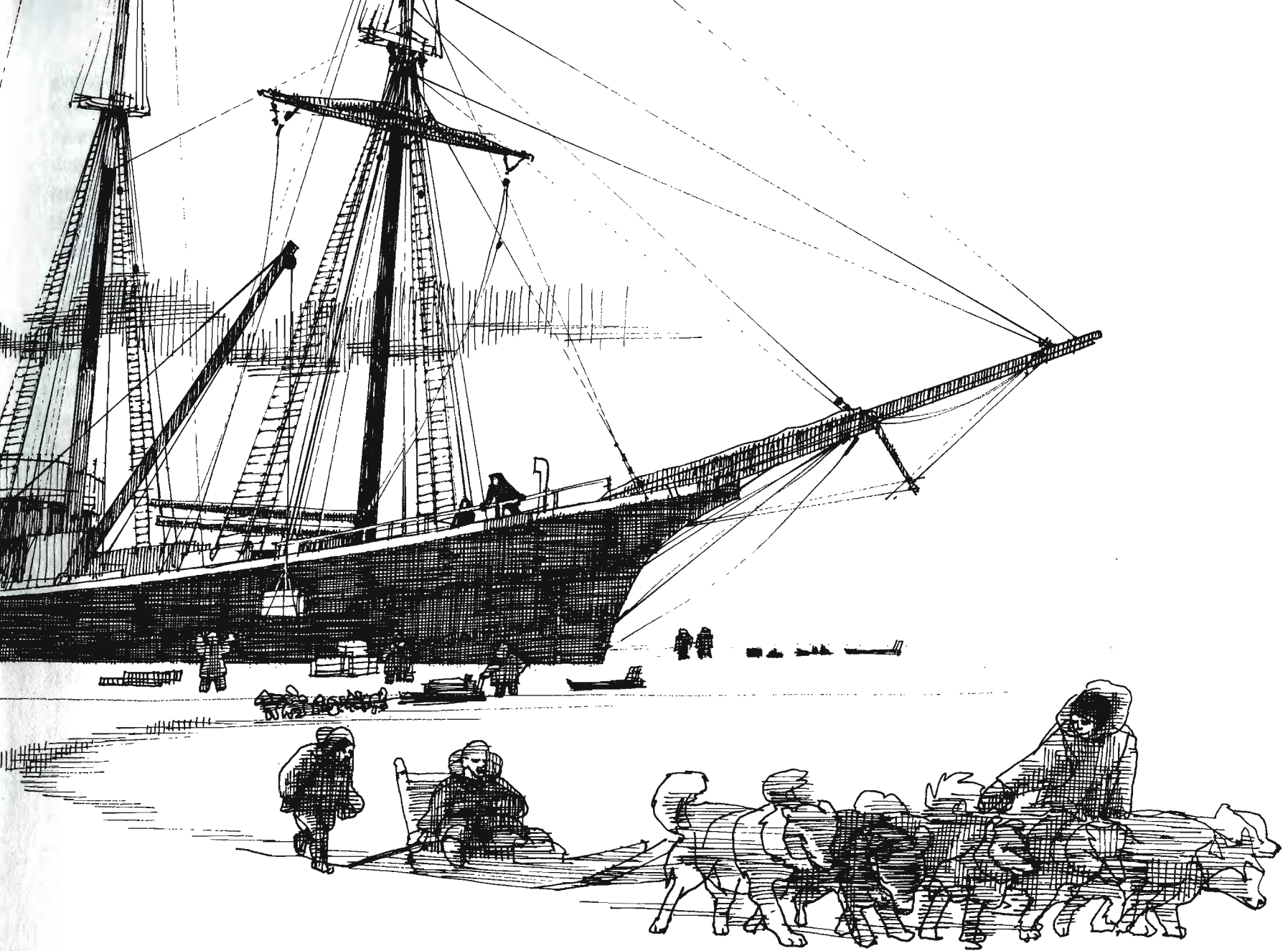
While I was still a youth I learned that scientists were very curious about the history and the culture of the Eskimos, and I decided to join the search for information. I started studying the Eskimos when I was twenty-three years old and spent the rest of my life at this task. First, I studied the Eskimos in Greenland for eighteen years. When I had collected all the information I could there, the time came for me to study other Eskimo groups in North America.

The Expedition to North America

I began making plans in 1921 to continue the study of the Eskimos in North America. I went to Denmark and gathered a group of scientists in Copenhagen. There we planned an expedition that would take us all across North America from eastern Canada to Alaska. In our group we had a geographer, a cartographer, a naturalist, an archaeologist and an ethnographer. Other scientists from the University of Copenhagen and from the Danish National Museum gave us advice as we mapped out our journey. The expedition was supported by King Christian X of Denmark, which was a great honor for us.

On June 17, 1921, the expedition left Copenhagen for Thule in Greenland. There we added to our group several Eskimos who would hunt and provide food for the scientific members of the expedition and the dogs. Without their help we could not have made our journey.

In mid-September we left Greenland. Even though our boat, the *Sea King*, a schooner of over 100 tons, was built for the treacherous waters of the Arctic, it was late in the year to be sailing so far north. We forced our way through heavy ice to the north of Southampton Island, where we found a tiny, uninhab-



ited island with a snug harbor. On Danish Island, as we called it, we built our winter quarters, our home for months to come. By October the ground was covered with snow and the sea was freezing over.

We knew that only a few men had been to this spot, because the animals were not frightened of us. Soon after we landed we found fresh bear tracks in the sand close to where we planned to build our house. Nearby we found a hare so tame that we could have captured it with our bare hands. A lonely caribou came running up to us to investigate his strange visitors. Never before had animals given me such a friendly welcome.

For a year we lived on Danish Island and went out on trips to work. Some went north to chart unknown lands; others went west looking for ruins of old Eskimo settlements. One studied the animals that spend the long winter in the Arctic, and another studied the few plants he could find. From time to time my companions and I would come back together to compare what we had learned.

Who Are the Eskimos?

Now we were started on our great task — to study all the tribes of the Eskimos. We wanted to know how they lived, how they hunted, how they amused themselves, what things they feared and believed about the future — everything we could learn about them.

No one knows the whole history of the Eskimos. We know only that they have not always lived in North America, as many do today. Many people think they came from Asia across the Bering Sea to Alaska, and from there they spread across northern Canada to Greenland. But no one really knows.

No one knows when the Eskimos came to North America, either. From ruins we know that more than 3,000 years ago there were Eskimos living in parts of the Arctic where Eskimos now live, but no one knows how long they had been there. I hoped to be able to answer some of these questions when I had finished my study of the Eskimos in North America.

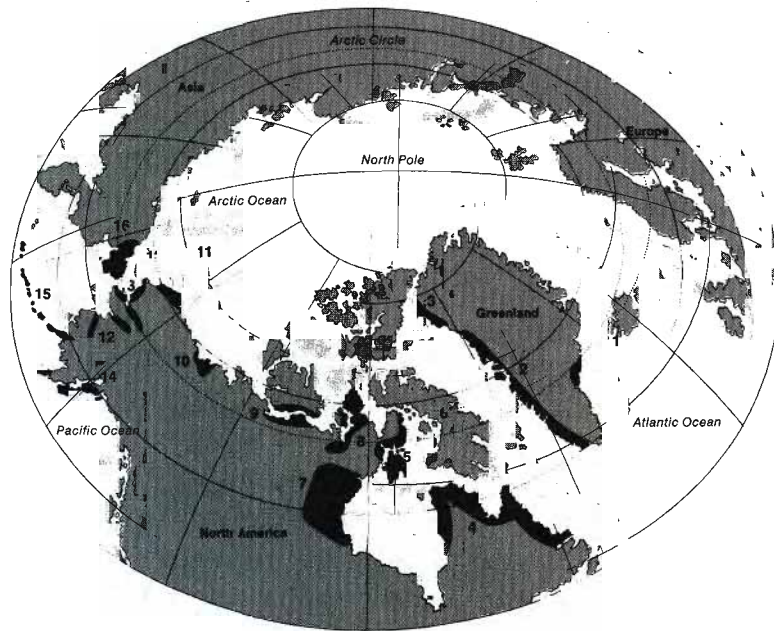
All the Eskimos alive at the time of my journey probably did not number more than 35,000.* They were divided into several large

* In the early 1960's there were about 60,000 Eskimos. Only 12,000 of them lived in Canada. Others lived in Alaska (more than 15,000), Greenland (30,000), and Siberia (1,500).

groups, or tribes, and they were scattered through the Arctic from Greenland, across North America to Siberia in Asia. Each tribe was made up of smaller groups. Sometimes members of different tribes met and spent time together, but more often the groups lived apart from their neighbors.

After being separated into tribes and living apart for so long, the Eskimos might have stopped being like one another. They might have had completely different customs and even a different language. But this did not happen. The Eskimo language I learned as a boy in Greenland could be understood by all the tribes across North America. In my travels from Canada to Alaska I heard from the Eskimos many of the same tales I had been told as a child. They were the ancient stories that all the Eskimos know, no matter where they live. Many of the people's customs were the same, too, although they lived many hundreds of miles apart.

The group I was most anxious to study was the Netsilik tribe. Most of them lived near the sea around and to the west of Pelly Bay. They live in one of the world's most difficult places. Winter takes up most of their lives. It is a hard, stormy winter beginning in September and lasting until the next June. The temperature is 50 degrees below zero in the worst of the winter. In spring, when warmer weather should set



GREENLAND

1. East Greenlanders (east coast of Greenland)
2. West Greenlanders (west coast of Greenland)
3. Polar Eskimos (northwest Greenland)

CANADA

4. Labrador Eskimos (Ungava Peninsula)
5. South Baffinlanders (extinct since 1903; lived on Southampton Island)
6. Iglulik Eskimos (Melville Peninsula and Repulse Bay)
7. Caribou Eskimos (west coast of Hudson Bay and inland)
8. Netsilik Eskimos (Simpson Peninsula to King William Island)

9. Copper Eskimos (Victoria Island and the mainland coast to the south)
10. Mackenzie Eskimos (mouth of the Mackenzie River)

ALASKA

11. Point Barrow Eskimos (northern tip of Alaska)
12. Colville Eskimos (along the rivers in northwestern Alaska)
13. Bering Sea Eskimos (west coast of Alaska)
14. Pacific Eskimos (southern Alaska and Kodiak Island)
15. Aleuts (Aleutian Islands)

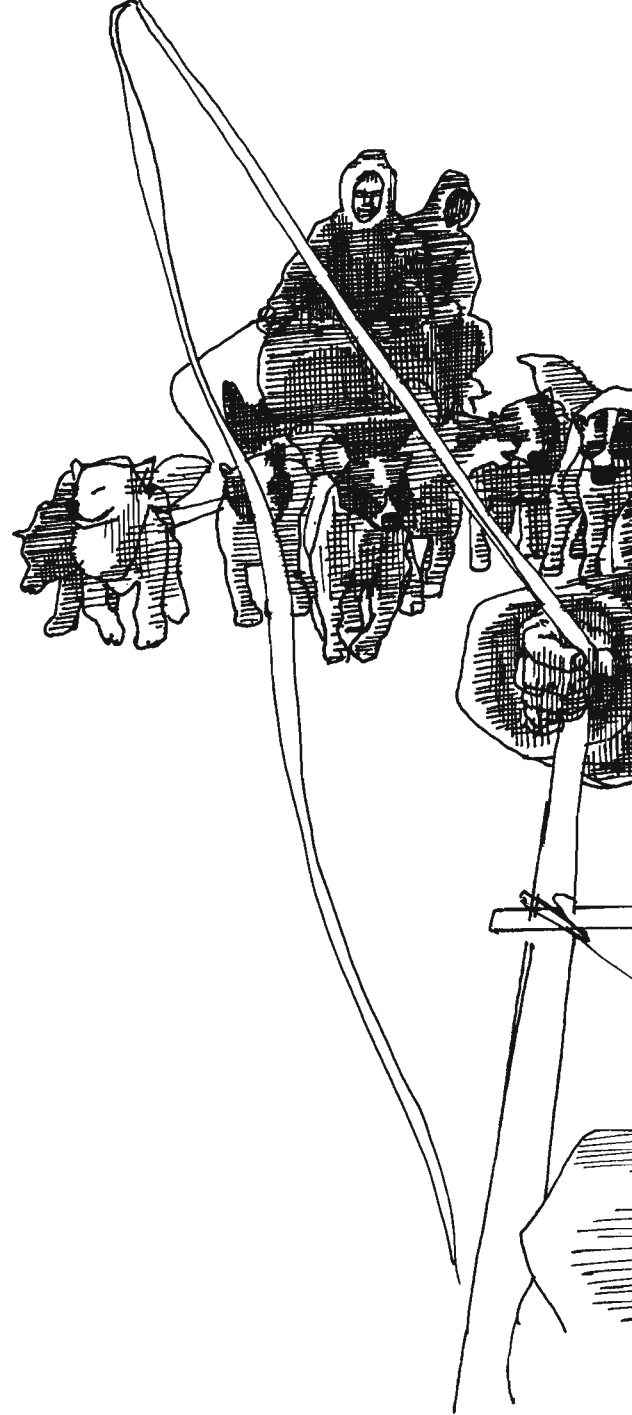
SIBERIA

16. Asiatic Eskimos (eastern tip of Siberia)

in, it is often so raw and stormy that it is difficult to get food. In June, July and August there are a few warm days when nature awakes and everything seems to be growing. On these mild days difficulties are forgotten and it feels wonderful to be alive. But these periods are brief, a few days at the most in a year.

There is never much extra food for these Eskimos. In the short periods when they have more than they need, they store up food for the many days when no hunting is possible. If they do not put away an extra supply in summer and fall, they know that before winter ends they will go hungry.

I knew that I could learn much about Eskimo life from them, because they lived so much apart from other people. Very few men other than Eskimos had been to the land of the Netsilik tribe.



The Journey to Pelly Bay

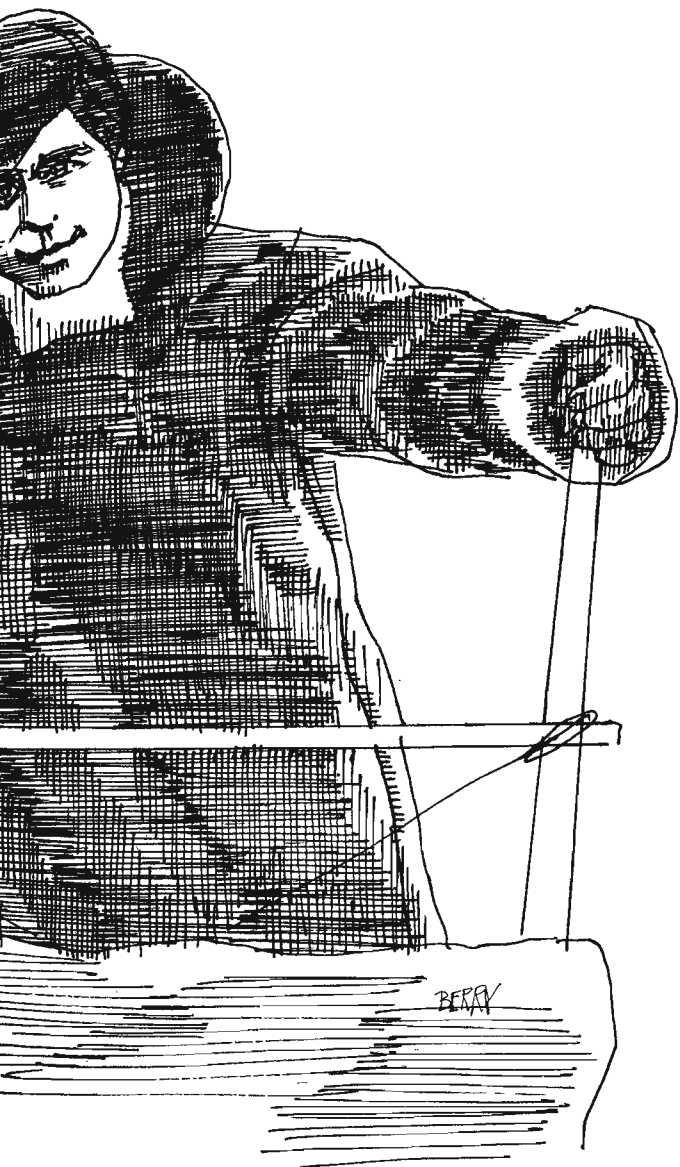
March 20
Setting Out

I left Danish Island on March 10, 1923, for Repulse Bay. There I left my last Danish companion and set off on the journey that would take me all the way across the top of North America.

The Arctic morning was full of promise when I set out. I had four people with me: a Greenland Eskimo hunter and his cousin and two Netslik Eskimo guides.

We had two large sleds, each drawn by twelve dogs. We had taken with us plenty of food for the dogs, and sugar and coffee and flour for ourselves. We planned to hunt along the way for fresh meat for ourselves and for the dogs, whose appetites were huge.

As we left Repulse Bay, we realized that we were leaving civilization as we knew it. For months we could not know what was going on in the rest of the world or tell others what we were doing — not until we had crossed the continent and reached a telegraph station somewhere in Alaska.



March 23
Crossing Rae Isthmus

We crossed Rae Isthmus in four short stages. The snow made easy traveling, but we did not want to tire the dogs so early in our long journey. We were happy to stop for the day when we had covered twenty miles.

The scenery was beautiful and always changing. Sometimes it was stony and bare, sometimes the slopes were smooth and so well covered with snow that the dogs pulled the heavy loads easily. Yesterday we passed a lake, surrounded by low hills. Near there we came on a few caribou already started on their spring wanderings.

Rae Isthmus, the land between Repulse Bay and Committee Bay, has always been a favorite hunting ground for the Eskimos. In spring and fall huge herds of caribou travel over this land. There are trout in the streams and lakes, and along the coast the seal hunting is good. From the remains of camping places along our route we knew that many Eskimos had hunted here.

Now we were only a few miles from Committee Bay, but we stayed inland. On the smooth land we could make better progress than on the packed-up ice of the sea.

March 25
The Giant Inusuk

We took most of the day to go up through a rocky mountain pass. To do this, we had to unload the sleds and carry the baggage on our backs, or we would have ruined the fragile runners of the sleds. Finally we were across the mountains and down on the fringe of flat land along Committee Bay.

The land on the edge of Committee Bay was full of fish fossils. One of our Eskimo companions told a tale about how the fossils came to be there:

Here once lived the giant Inusuk, who used to catch salmon down in a great ravine at the head of Pelly Bay. Sometimes he hunted seal by wading out into the sea and killing them with a stick. Before he waded out into the sea and made it rise, though, he moved all the people living by the low shores up on the highest islands.

Inusuk was so eager when he hunted that once he slipped and fell. When his giant body fell into the water, it made a great wave wash over the land. This wave washed schools of small fish on shore. There were sea scorpions, codfish, flounders, and all the animals of the sea. When the wave dropped back again, the fish remained on the land and in time turned to stone. These are the fossils lying about everywhere.



Perly



March 28

Meeting Eskimos

In the midst of a great snowstorm, we had our first meeting with the people of these parts. Our Netsilik guides spotted two men and called to me. They were excited and concerned, because the Eskimos consider it an important thing to meet strangers on the trail. They never know whether the travelers will turn out to be friends or enemies.

Never have I gotten into my clothes so quickly to throw myself out into a snowstorm. Outside, I saw the men walking slowly toward our igloo. To let them know that we were friends, I left my weapons behind and went toward them at once, although they were carrying long snow knives and seal harpoons. They knew immediately that I was not another Eskimo, and so they were surprised and confused when I spoke to them in their own language.

"You can put your weapons away. We are peaceful people who have come to visit your country."

One of the men replied, "We are just ordinary people, and we mean no harm. We saw your igloos and knew you were none of our own people, so we came to see who it was."

At first the two men were shy, but soon they were talking happily. They were Orpingalik

and his son Kanajok, Netsilik Eskimos on their way from Pelly Bay to Repulse Bay with their families to trade fox skins for supplies. Like most Eskimos they were smiling and friendly and pleasant to be with. Even though the snow-storm was still raging, we decided to move our belongings down to their camp and to spend some time with them.

March 29

With Orpingalik and His Family

In Orpingalik's camp there were eight people living in two igloos with a passage between them. The igloos were cozy and comfortable in spite of the weather. Three blubber lamps heated them, and on the sleeping places there were many thick caribou skins. Near one of the lamps caribou meat and salmon were thawing.

As soon as we arrived, chilled salmon and chunks of caribou meat were put out for us. While we ate inside with the women, the men of the camp built a large and roomy igloo for our use. In less than an hour they had finished, and when we lit our lamp we had a cozy winter home.

The members of Orpingalik's family were skilled travelers, even though they had only four dogs among them. Very few Eskimos could keep more, because dogs needed so much

food. With so few dogs, the family did not just walk along beside the sleds when they traveled. They pulled the traces themselves, helping the dogs to drag the loaded sleds.

April 1

More About Orpingalik and His Family

Orpingalik was a respected hunter. He was a strong and deadly archer and fast in a kayak when the caribou were hunted at the places where they swam across lakes and rivers.

While my companions were carrying our supplies down from our previous camp, I talked with Orpingalik. It would be helpful for me to know something about the Netsilik Eskimos through their tales before I went to spend some time with them. Orpingalik knew many tales and magic songs. Translating magic words is a hard job, because many of them are made up of parts of words that don't have any meaning. But their mystery only adds to their power. The Eskimos do not think it is important to understand the words, as long as the spirits understand and know what is wanted.

Orpingalik was not just a teller of other people's tales; he made up songs about his own life. When I asked him how many songs he had composed, he replied:

"I keep no count of such things. I only know



that I have many songs. I sing as easily as I draw breath."

His wife made songs, too. Just then she was sorrowful over the fate of their son Igsivalitak, who had murdered a hunting companion and now lived as an outlaw in the mountains around Pelly Bay. This is a bit of her song about her outlaw son:

Should I be ashamed
At the child I carried on my back
Because I heard of his flight
From the homes of men?

Truly I am ashamed,
But only because he did not have
A mother who was blameless as the blue sky,
Wise and without foolishness.

April 5 *Parting with Orpingalik*

It was a sad farewell when we broke camp and continued on our ways, Orpingalik and his family to Repulse Bay, we on toward the west. We had grown fond of one another and it was hard to part.

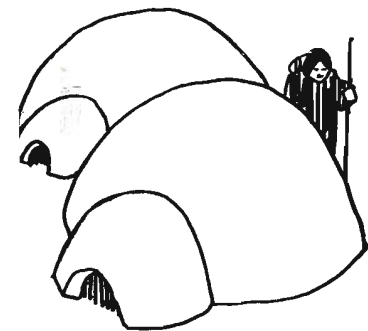
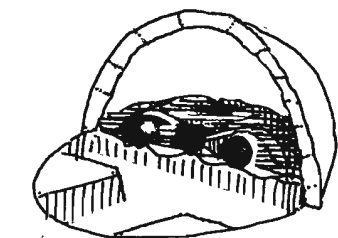
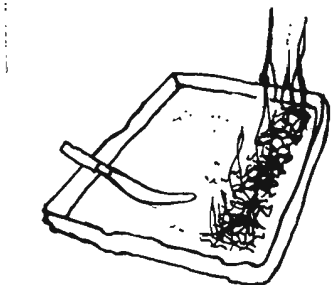
Their little caravan set off, the men in harness with the dogs, the women ahead of them breaking the trail. As they went away one of the sons turned back to us and called:

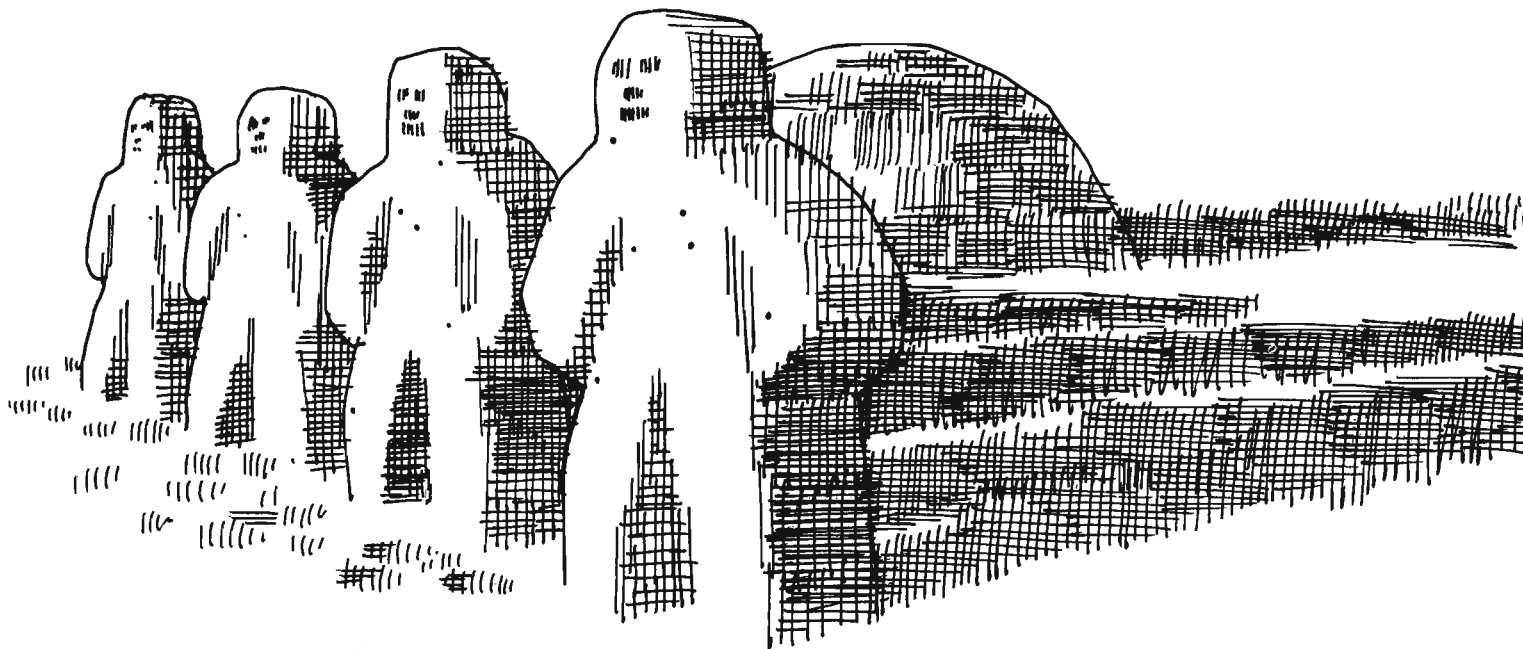
"May we all travel without evil spirits along."

April 8 *Near Pelly Bay*

Orpingalik had told us that we would meet many people in Pelly Bay. We had bought food from Orpingalik to last us through our stay there. This food was salmon and caribou meat that he had cached, or stored under piles of rocks so animals could not get at it, near Pelly Bay. The only thing we had to do now was to find the caches.

We had no trouble finding the salmon in the first cache, but to find the other we had to get in touch with Orpingalik's outlaw son, Igsivalitak. I knew this would be no easy matter, because he would be far from a regular trail. It would be difficult to find a white igloo in all that vast whiteness. What is more, even though Orpingalik and his family had told us not to worry about the meeting, we were not eager to go unarmed to meet a murderer we knew was well armed.





April 9
The Hunt for Igsivalitak

In fine sunshine I drove out on this exciting adventure with my guide. We crossed the river delta where great cliffs of clay rose high above the river — a startling sight in this flat landscape. From there we went over wide plains, peering for tracks in the new snow. Finally, the dogs picked up the scent and we went at a fly-

ing gallop over a lake. A small igloo was visible on the shore, and in a few minutes we were there. To our disappointment, we saw fresh sled tracks running north. The outlaw must have fled earlier when he heard our dogs. (The feeding of two teams of dogs is no quiet matter!)

It looked as though the family had spent a long time at this camp. Behind the hut there were big blocks of snow, the kind the Eskimos

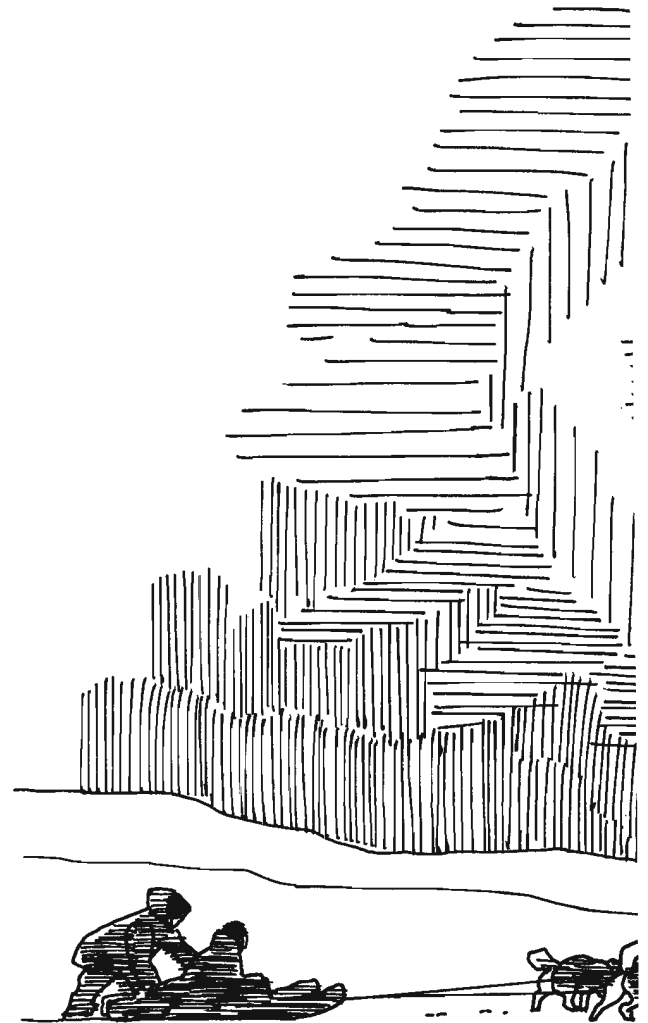
use for target practice with the bow and arrow. From the many footprints around the target we knew that the man we were looking for had practiced his shooting often.

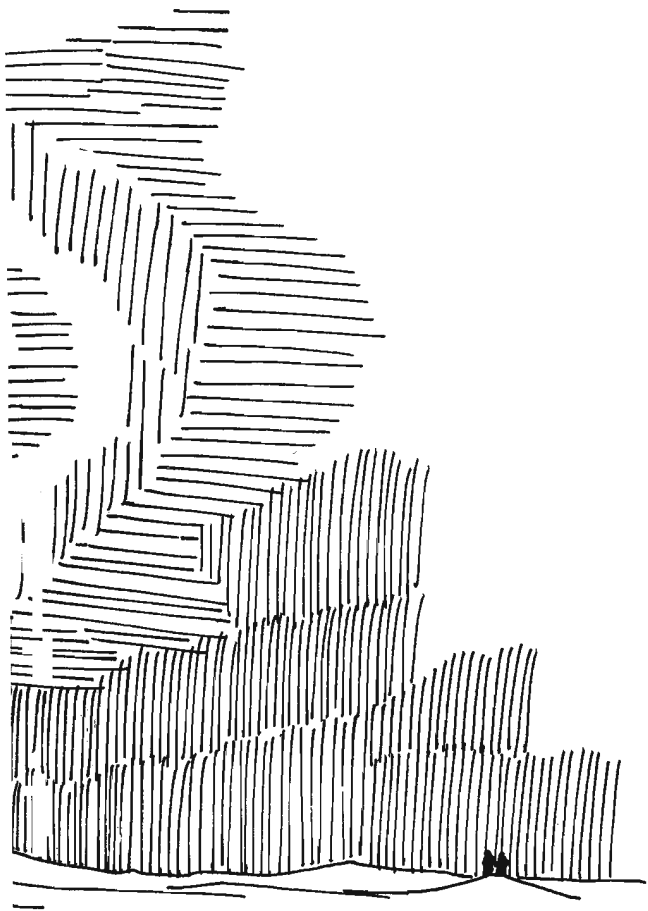
We had no time to waste, so we turned the dogs onto the fresh trail and set off again. Soon we caught sight of two black dots far ahead, like two ravens on a mound of ice. We came nearer and saw that the dots were two men watching us. My guide brought out big snow knives and put them within easy reach. I laughed at him, but he said, "Better to be prepared. Igsivalitak is a proud man. If he thinks we have been sent out by the Canadian police to find him, he may attack us."

The dogs raced on, and we quickly came close to the two men. When we were quite near, the outlaw's son came running toward us. I slowed the dogs just enough so I could shout to the young man to get on our sled. In a moment we arrived at the igloo where Igsivalitak stood.

As soon as the dogs stopped, I went toward him with the same greeting his father had used to me: "We are only quite ordinary people who think of no evil."

I told him that his father and brothers had sent me to his hiding place. When he heard this, he was so relieved that he was almost silly with joy. He invited us into his igloo and overwhelmed us with his hospitality. As soon as he was calmer he told us his story.





Others have told you why I live by myself; now I would rather tell you the whole story myself.

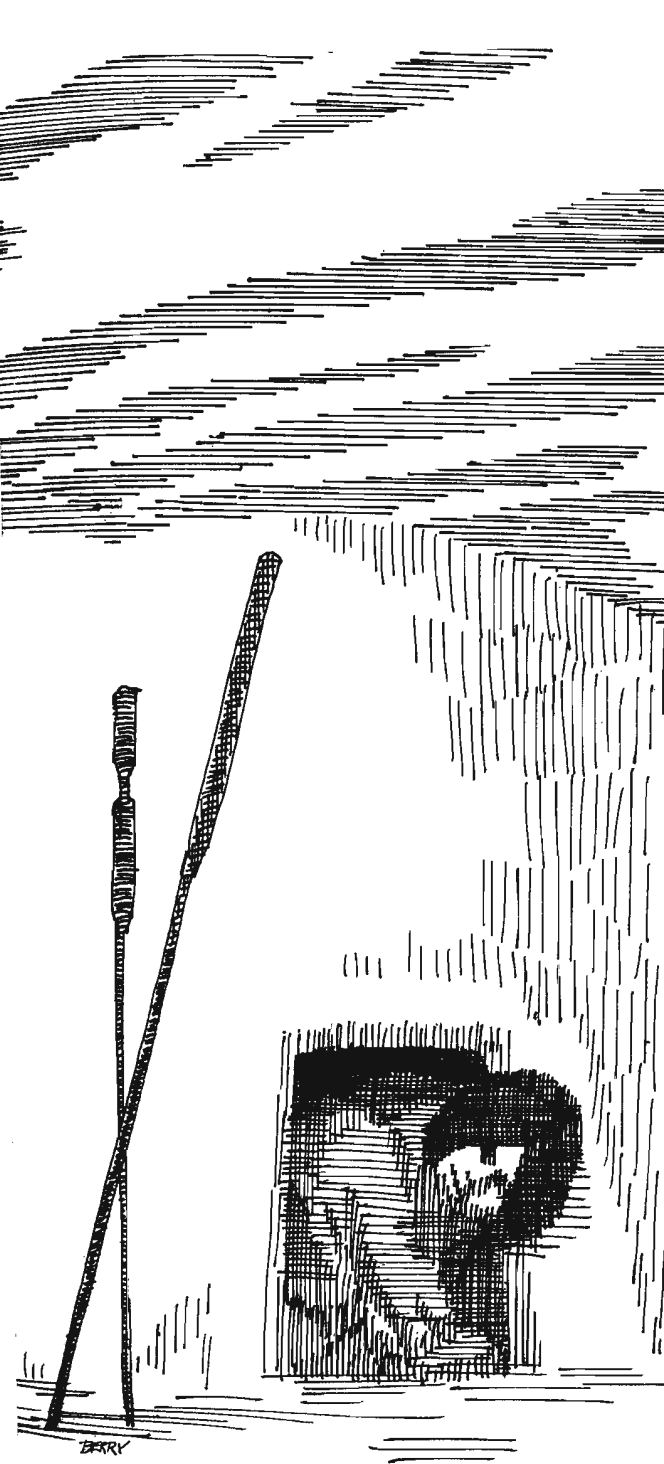
I had a hunting companion with whom I spent much time. We were equally matched in skill, but he was the stronger. When we practiced our sports, my partner, who could not run as far as I could, used every opportunity to let me know that he was not afraid of me. And then one day, to prove that he was better, he insulted me in a terrible way. When a man does that in our country it means that he wants to kill you. Hatred grew in me, and every time I met my old companion out hunting, thoughts that I could not control came up in me. So one day when we were alone together, I killed him.

That's all and I have nothing else to tell.

The dead man's relatives might take revenge on him. Igsivalitak knew that and was not afraid. But he was afraid of the men who would come from the settlements in the south, the Canadian police, who would punish him in their own way in a place that would be strange to him.

It was a sad story and I talked to the outlaw a long time about it. I told him not to run away from the Canadian police or to resist them if they surprised him. It seemed to me that he could not rightly be punished according to customs and laws he knew nothing about. Still, I explained to him as well as I could the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." But he did not really believe me because once in Repulse Bay a trader had told him about the World War.





With the Eskimos at Pelly Bay

April 10

The Camp on Pelly Bay

We drove out onto the ice of Pelly Bay to a small cluster of igloos. The Eskimos living here are named for the bay. They call themselves the Arviligjuarmiut, or Pelly Bay Netsilik, to distinguish their group from the other four groups that together make up the Netsilik tribe. The other groups call themselves by the names of places they live near. They are:

Bellot Strait Netsilik, far north on Boothia Peninsula

Netsilik Lake Netsilik, on Boothia Isthmus
Adelaide Peninsula Netsilik, who sometimes cross over to King William Island

Back River Netsilik, the only Netsilik who do not hunt on the sea.

At this time of year, there were more than sixty people living out on the ice in the bay. They were divided into two camps and all were living by hunting seal. Each camp was made up of several large families. Following Netsilik tradition, there was no formal chief in either group. During seal-hunting time, the best hunter is looked to as the leader of the group. The other hunters are happy to follow his advice on where the hunting may be good.

Hunting conditions in this area were good, the people said. They were proud that they did not often have times of starvation as some of the other Eskimo groups did. Their hunting year was divided among caribou, seal and trout. Only rarely did they hunt for musk oxen, and then without much success.

When hunting seal, the method they used was breathing-hole hunting. Sealing from kayaks in the warm months was not known to these people. They used their kayaks only to hunt caribou on lakes and rivers. Their harpoons were made for hunting through the ice, not in the open sea.

April 11

Life on the Sea Ice

In the fall when the winter clothing is finished, the people start on their way to the ice. In some years they go out in November, but in other years they wait until January or Feb-

ruary. It all depends on the supply of meat in the caches.

Out on the ice, life is made up of constant journeys. The people move to a new hunting area as soon as there are no more seals near the camp. Where the seals will be in the winter depends on how the ice forms in the fall. If winter comes quickly and the bays and the sea all freeze at the same time, few seals can get far into the bays. But if the bays freeze while the sea is still open, the seals have time to come into the bays. The Eskimos watch all the conditions closely. They know before winter has begun whether it is likely to be a hard one.

People living together in a seal-hunting camp feel close to one another in many ways.



It is a season of companionship, because only in the winter do many families come together. There is happiness as well as security in the large group. They feel that they cannot manage alone, but must depend on one another to survive. The men call their hunting partners "the men we live with on the firm ice." They mean, "If I don't catch anything, I will get food from someone else in the camp." They know this is true, because each hunter shares his catch with the other families.

Caches that have been kept from summer are shared, too. When caribou meat or fish is brought into camp, it would be painful indeed if everyone were not invited to share in a festive meal.

Sharing seals at the winter camp is a thing that is always done. There are no real laws among the Netsilik, just as there are no formal leaders. But there are powerful traditions that are always followed. All have to do with actions that affect the group as a whole. Sharing food is one. Another is the rule that every man who is able must join the hunt. A sick or injured man, or one too old to hunt, is fed by others. But no man can stay home without good reason.

There is only one other rule: that no one can settle in a camp without the approval of the others in the camp. It is easy to see how this rule helps to keep peace in the group.



April 12

Suspicion Among Friends

One would think that in these lonely regions travelers would be happy to meet others who would be company. But not so. Even to this day a sled party does not drive right up to a settlement. An informal arrival like that might be misunderstood and could frighten the people in the settlement into attacking the visitors.

An old man told me how in the past people were even more suspicious of one another unless they were closely related. In his grandfather's day, he said, when people moved together from one hunting place to another, they drove sled behind sled, in a long line, the first breaking the trail. There were few dogs, so men and women had to pull, too. Every man kept his snow knife in his hand and had his sealing harpoon nearby. No one could stop for any reason without great risk, for the one who walked in front might get the idea that the one behind would strike him down. Even if they seemed to be friends, they could never be sure that another did not have evil thoughts.

When they came near a settlement, the group stopped about a mile away and sent a woman up to tell who they were and that they had no hostile feelings. Only when the truce-bearer had been well received could the rest drive up without hesitation.

April 13

The Story of Kigtak

In winters when seal hunting is bad, the Netsilik must be on the move all the time. Then the winter becomes very hard for everyone, especially for the old people. Families have different ways of treating their old relatives. There are helpful and sympathetic sons and sons-in-law, and there are hard-hearted ones. Either way, the fate of the old people lies in their hands.

The move from one hunting place to another is like a whole migration. Men and women have to take with them everything they own. True, they do not own much, but when clothing, sleeping skins, and tools are piled on the small sleds, there is no room for people to sit. In a long line the sleds move over the ice. Finally, when they arrive at an area where good hunting can be expected, they must find a place with deep, well-packed snow for building igloos. Only then can they stop and make a camp.

These moves are very slow. Very young children ride on the sleds, and their older brothers and sisters struggle through the snow to keep up with the group. The people who have difficulty are the tired old men and women bent with rheumatism. They plod along behind. No matter how slowly the group moves, they can-

not keep up, and they do not arrive at the camp until long after the others — sometimes not until the next morning.

I asked many people how old people were treated, and from all the questions I heard only one case that sounded like heartlessness. An old woman named Kigtak had a son-in-law named Arfek. When Arfek and his family moved camp, Kigtak was often left out on the ice in midwinter, dressed only in a thin inner jacket because she had no thick, warm outer coat. Even in bad weather she often had to sleep on the ice because she had not caught up with the others. They said about her:

“She was not dead yet, and life was still sweet to her.”

I asked the people if they did not think that more care should be taken of an old woman. One man summed up the feelings of all the others:

“No one wishes harm to old people. We too may be old someday.

“There are many among us who think Arfek might take more care of his mother-in-law, particularly by giving her better clothes.

“But some excuse Arfek because he has been so unlucky in his hunting that he has barely enough furs for his wife and his children. He should take care of them first, for not only are they more closely related to him, but they have their lives before them. There is little future for a tired old woman.



"There are others who think that Arfek should let his mother-in-law ride on his sled. That would do his family no harm. And still others think that the least he could do is to go back for her when he has built his igloo. But then, if he has to be at the breathing holes the next morning at the proper time, probably he cannot travel back over the ice to save old Kigtak. He has to choose between helping an old person or getting food for his wife and children. This is how it is, and we see no real wickedness in it.

"Perhaps it is more surprising that old Kigtak, now that she is no longer able to care for herself, still hangs on as a burden to her children and grandchildren. It is our custom here that old people who can do no more in life help death to take them. They do this not just to be rid of life that is no longer a pleasure. They do it so they will no longer be such a trouble to their families."

April 14

Netsilik Families

Among the Netsilik, a man and his wife live together like good comrades. Even though a man may have given a sled or a kayak to get his wife, she is not treated like a bit of property. Netsilik women talk freely, and with their sharp humor they often dominate the group.

I spent months with families in igloos and tents. In that time I saw little difference between Eskimo married couples and married couples I knew elsewhere. Husband and wife show their affection by calling each other by pet names that only they can use. The same goes for children. Parents have special names they call each one.

All work is divided quite naturally between men and women. Men get the food, and women do the housework. A high value is set on a good housekeeper, and a good seamstress is especially valued. A woman has special duties, and she also has rights. She has her own property: her lamp, cooking pot, ulu, sewing needles, meat trays, water buckets, and ladles made of musk-ox horn. She brings these things with her when she marries, and takes them with her if she leaves her husband.

A Netsilik woman spends her life under such hard conditions that she has little time for ornaments. She has only her hairsticks, hollowed-

out pieces of wood or bone that she can use to protect her hair. She ties her hair onto the hair-sticks with strips of caribou skin.

One of the most important things a wife does is to take care of the family's clothing. A grown man is helpless if he has no one to make and take care of his clothes. If a man is about to set off on a journey and his wife is sick or unable to go with him, he may borrow the wife of his song partner to take along, giving his own wife in exchange. This kind of wife-exchange is necessary in the kind of life the Eskimos lead.

Among the Netsilik, divorce is common as long as there are no children. But once they have children, a man and wife seldom part. Their pleasure in children is great. If a couple cannot have children of their own, they always try to adopt at least one or two children from more fortunate families. Adopted children are usually bought, and the price is high. One woman bought her adopted son for a cooking pot and a kayak, both very precious things.

Children are treated well and affectionately. If food is scarce, parents happily give up whatever they can so their children can eat. They think it is quite natural for them to go hungry so the little ones have food. Adopted children receive the same treatment as their own children.

Most children are promised in marriage before they are born. Their parents make the agreement even before they know whether the



baby is a boy or a girl. Of course, if it turns out that a boy is born when a girl was promised, the agreement is broken or put off until the next baby is born. Otherwise, these promised marriages almost always take place when the children grow up, even if the families are living far apart at the time.

A man who does not have a wife promised to him may be in difficulty. In the kind of life the Netsilik lead, he cannot manage without a woman. Yet there are not enough women to go around. A man may have to steal a wife from another man, if he has no promised girl.

Wife-stealing is a serious business, and it often leads to bloodshed or even death. The man who did the killing often chooses the lonely and hard life of an outlaw. Otherwise, the family of the man he murdered would have every right to kill him in revenge. Among the Netsilik, there is no law about murder. The punishment is strictly a family affair.

April 15

The Importance of Boys

A startling thing about the Netsilik Eskimos' struggle to survive is how they feel about children. They would like to have many sons and few daughters. If a girl baby has not already been promised as a future wife, her family may feel that they cannot provide for her. If there

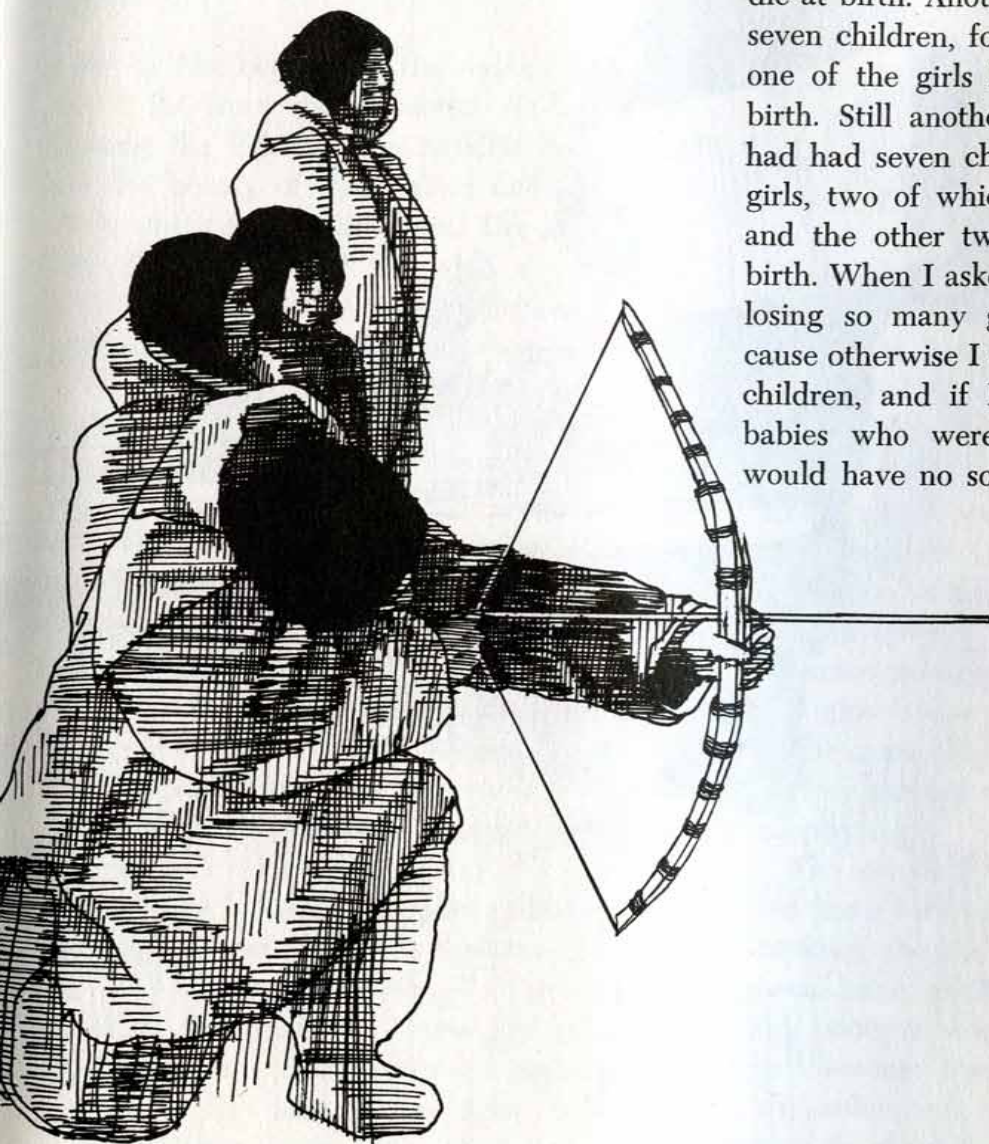
is no family to adopt her, it is their custom to allow the child to die. Netsilik mothers dare not feel any affection for their newborn children until they know that the child will live.

The Netsilik know how important women are, but a girl is only another mouth to feed as long as she is a child. The moment she is old enough to really help, she marries and goes to live with her husband's family. A son, on the other hand, grows up to be a hunter. He stays with his parents and supports them when they get old.

Hunting is such hard work that a man can be a good hunter for only a few years. He is soon past his prime and can no longer keep up with the younger hunters. An old Eskimo man once said to me, "The hardness of life has taught us that it is good to have as many sons as possible."

A woman who nurses a baby may have to wait two or three years to have another baby. But if she does not have to nurse, she could have another baby much sooner and the new baby might be a boy. A woman told me, "Life is short; so parents often think that they cannot afford to waste several years nursing a girl. We get old so quickly, we must be quick to get a son."

I talked to several Netsilik women in one camp about the children they had. One had borne eleven children — four boys and seven



girls, of which four girls had been allowed to die at birth. Another woman said she had had seven children, four boys and three girls, and one of the girls had been allowed to die at birth. Still another woman told me that she had had seven children: three boys and four girls, two of which had been allowed to die and the other two had been given away at birth. When I asked her whether she regretted losing so many girls, she replied, "No, because otherwise I would not have had so many children, and if I had nursed all those girl babies who were born before the boys, I would have no sons now."



April 16
Igloos

Life on the sea ice is dependent upon the igloo, the snug winter shelter of the Arctic. Among the Eskimos the Netsilik are famous for the beauty of their igloos and the speed with which they build them. They even predict the direction of the wind so well that they can make snow walls to protect the entrance to the igloo from the strong, icy winds.

In no time at all, it seemed to me, a man with only his snow knife as a tool would have carved out snow blocks and put them securely in place. He cut them so they made a spiral to the top, thus making a structure so strong that a man could stand on it.

A window to let in light is usually a piece of freshwater ice. When they are living far out on the sea ice, they must take the slab with them on their long journey. They can manage with a piece of salt water ice, but it is not nearly as clear or as light as fresh water ice.

Inside the igloo the sleeping platform takes up half the area. Nearby is the snow platform to hold the lamp, and above it is a drying rack. At the other end of the sleeping platform is a small platform for storing meat.

Each family has its own igloo, but close relatives often build igloos that adjoin and

use a single entrance. The ceremonial igloo, the center of activity for all the people, is often built so that it connects three or four igloos of the best hunters in the camp.

April 17
Waking Up in an Igloo

In an igloo it is always the woman who begins the day. She gets up first in the morning and takes her fur clothes from under the sleeping skins where she had put them the night before, folded to make a pillow. She dresses quickly and then tends the blubber lamp, which she had trimmed so it would burn very low during the night to use little oil.

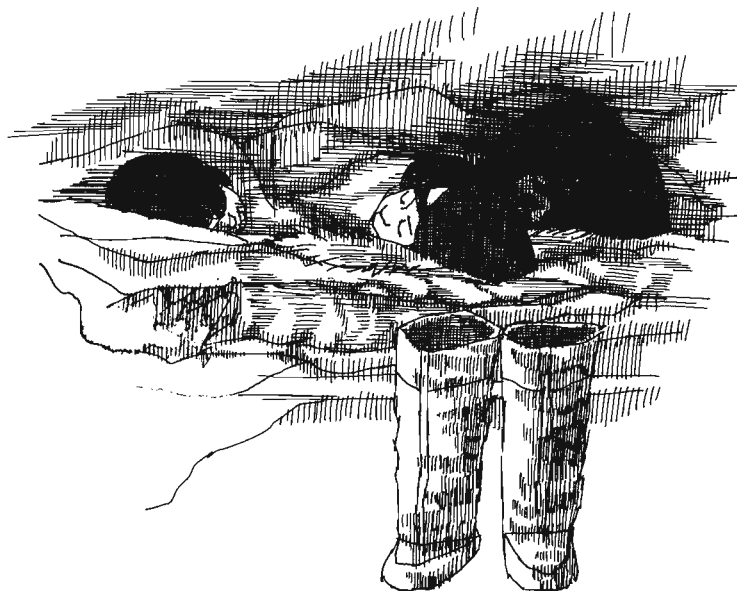
As soon as the lamp is burning brightly, the woman removes the block of snow from the entrance passage of the igloo. This means that the igloo is open to visitors. The other people in the camp think that a woman who does not remove the snow block early is a poor housekeeper.

The woman's next task is to put food over the lamp for her husband. While the food is cooking, she looks over the clothing that had been hung on the drying rack to dry. Stiff, dry boots or mittens she softens by stretching or chewing. Meanwhile, the young children are waking up, and she gives each a bit of food to chew on while she works.

The first meal of the day is usually blood soup with blubber or boiled meat in it. The man eats while he is still lying on the sleeping platform. Then he dresses in his caribou-skin clothing and prepares for his day's activities. A hunting companion visits the igloo to make plans for the day's hunt. They talk about the weather and where the seals may be found that day.

As soon as the visitor leaves, the man puts on his outer parka, takes his snow knife from beside the door and goes out the tunnel. He must ice the sled runners for the trip to the hunting place. Soon he calls his wife to help him harness the dogs. All over the camp, families are doing the same thing.

Finally, the men shout to the dogs and are



off over the ice, and the women return to their igloos. While the men are away, they enjoy the companionship of the other women in the camp. They play games among themselves and with their children. In this gaiety they do not neglect their daily tasks.

April 18

Hunting Seals Through the Sea Ice

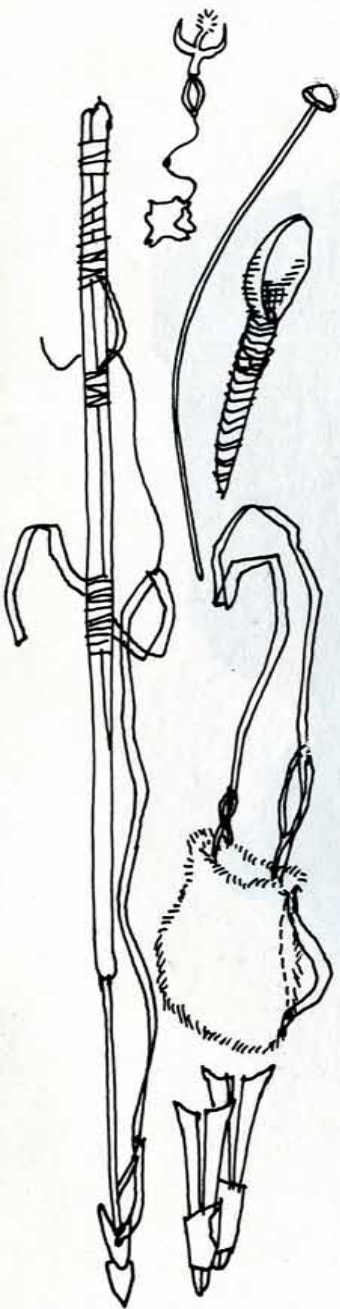
Hunting seals through their breathing holes becomes a great art when a hunter has had years of practice and experience. Among all the Eskimos, the Netsilik are known to be the best in this method of hunting.

As the sea freezes over in the fall, the seals scratch small holes through the ice with their knifelike claws. It is through these holes that they breathe when the sea is all covered with ice. As long as the ice is thin, it is not difficult to harpoon them through the holes. But as the ice gets thicker, it is more and more difficult to get a seal this way.

At first, when the ice is thin, the hole appears as a tiny dome on the surface. Soon the ice is covered by the early snows of winter, but the seal's breath makes a hole in the snow. As the ice thickens, the seal continues to keep the hole open, scratching through the thin layer of ice on the top of the water every time he comes up to breathe. If a hunter finds a hole



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with no thin covering of ice, he knows that a seal is using it constantly and it will be worth his while to wait for the animal to return.

Every seal has several breathing holes, so it can move over a wide area to get food yet come up at least every fifteen minutes to breathe. This is what makes hunting at the breathing holes so difficult, because a man may wait for many hours not knowing that the seal is far away at another hole. The only way the hunters can improve their chances is to collect a large group of people to watch all the holes in one area. Then the seals are forced to come to a hole to breathe even if someone is there. If one of these group hunts takes place where there are many seals, the kill is usually large.

I learned about seal hunting at the breathing holes by going off with hunters from the camp in Pelly Bay. Early one morning, Innuk, my hunting companion, and I were awakened when a pail of blood soup was put before us. We drank it drowsily, and then we quickly got into our clothes and joined the other hunters. Fifteen of us went off that day, each with a dog.

Finding a breathing hole without the help of a dog is simply a matter of chance. There are not many holes in all, and they are well covered by snow. But this day we had a fine dog on a leash, his nose working all the time,

sniffing and smelling from the moment we left the camp. Even so, we wandered for three hours before the first hole was found. As soon as the hole was discovered, all the men gathered around and threw their harpoons, trying to hit it. The lucky hunter whose harpoon comes the closest gets the hole, even if it was another who discovered it. Fortunately for me, Innuk got the first hole, so I stayed with him while the other men continued their search.

With the sureness of long practice, Innuk prepared for the hunt. First, he cut away the snow over the hole, exposing the little dome of ice. He opened the dome and scooped out the small lumps of ice in the hole with a scoop of musk oxen horn. When the hole was clear, he used his long, slender breathing-hole searcher to explore the shape of the hole. This is an important step, because if the hunter does not know just what position the seal will take in the hole when it breathes, his harpoon may miss the animal entirely.

When he had finished these investigations, Innuk replaced the snow over the hole. He made a small hole through the snow with his harpoon just over the hole in the ice, so that at the critical moment nothing would be in the way of the harpoon. Then, as a last step, he took out his swansdown indicator and placed it over the hole in such a way that the tiniest

breath of air would make it move. Thus he would know when the seal was coming to its hole and would be ready with his harpoon.

With everything in readiness, Innuk spread out the fur bag he had used to carry his tools and stepped onto it. He took his position over the hole, standing still as a statue, harpoon in hand and eyes fixed on the fluff of swansdown.

Hour after hour went by and nothing happened. It seemed like an eternity to me. But I knew that sometimes a man might stand for twelve hours by a hole when the supplies of food are low. Once even, I heard of a man who when times were very bad spent more than two days at a hole, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting, but always awake.

Finally, just as we were deciding to leave the hole, we caught sight of one of the hunters who had gotten his harpoon into a seal. We and all the other hunters in sight ran to him to take part in the feast that follows a kill. All the men knelt down in a circle around the seal while the man who made the catch cut a tiny hole in the stomach through which he took the liver and some blubber. He closed the hole carefully with special wooden needles, and then he cut the liver and blubber into small squares and gave a portion to each man. We welcomed this warm nourishment after our hours on the ice. Only the dogs do not get a taste of the kill, even though they are the



ones who make the kill possible. This seems hard, but it is against the ancient rules that guide the lives of these people to feed dogs at the place where a seal has been caught.

That single seal was the result of a day's hunting by fifteen men. But the men were happy that they had not gone out in vain. There is no abundance of seals in the land of the Netsilik. The best hunters think they are very lucky indeed if they manage to catch thirty seals in a whole season. I asked the men in that camp how many seals each had caught in that season, and this is what they told me:

	No. of seals
Innuk, middle-aged but strong hunter	30
Inutuk, fairly young hunter	7
Itkilik, middle-aged but clever hunter	20
Satlak, boy of 14 years	3
Ujarak, first-class hunter	24
Karsuak, young hunter of 23 years	17
Tarajuk, young crippled hunter	3
Karasuk, good hunter who was sick during the year	0
Inuksak, elderly hunter	2
Ujuminok, boy of 15 years	4
Mankalokut, average hunter	15
Orsoritok, prominent hunter	25
Total	150

April 18

Dogs

Dogs are the only domestic animals the Eskimos have. They could not get along without them. But the dogs need great quantities of food to work well. Because food is so hard to get, most families have only one or two dogs. Only the very best hunters have more.

Among the Netsilik, dogs are not used primarily to pull sleds as they are in regions where food is more plentiful. The people pull the sleds and the dogs help. As a result, long sled journeys are not made often. When a long journey cannot be avoided, a family tries to put together a team of dogs by borrowing from neighbors.

A Netsilik dog must never be overfed in winter, for then it will not use its nose. Its ability as a hunting dog is most valuable to the family. A breathing-hole hunter without a dog might just as well stay at home. If he has a dog, a hungry one, it will lead him over the ice looking for something to eat. From long distances it will suddenly prick its ears, lift its tail and rush away, not stopping until it has taken its master to a breathing hole.

The dogs are never tied up. When they are not being used, they run loose or stay in the entrance to the igloo. The treatment given them is often severe, and their food is nothing but

refuse and bones. But whenever there are supplies enough to give them more, they get into fine form in no time.

April 19 *Sharing the Seal*

There are special rules about how a seal is shared among the men who hunt together. These rules are especially important in mid-winter, when every bite of food is precious. In the spring, when everyone has food enough, a man can keep what he catches for himself.

If there are many men in a hunting camp, the man who catches the seal keeps the skin and some blubber, but little that is good to eat. He has to be content with the thought that he has been able to feed the camp. Often he is better off not to make the catch, but just to receive his share of the meat.

In breathing-hole hunting, sharing is so important that there are complicated rules for dividing a seal. In fact, a man never says, "I am going after a seal." Instead, he says, "I am going out to try to get a hunting share." Much of the pattern of sharing is based on partnerships that were established for young boys by their parents. If two boys are to share when they grow up, their fathers agree to share so that the boys can inherit the partnership. These partnerships usually last through the lifetimes

of the partners.

Sharing partners call each other by the name of the part they exchange. Two men who give each other a shoulder of the seal call each other "my shoulder" instead of their regular names. A partner has a right to his share, even if he is not able to go out with the hunters. Each man has only a few life-long sharing partners, so that all of each seal is not given away in advance. At each winter camp, though, he forms temporary partnerships with the other hunters there.

April 19 *Rules for Seal-hunting Time*

It is not enough for a man to be a good hunter and to go out in all sorts of weather to get food for his family. He must also be on good terms with the animals he hunts. There are many ways to secure the good luck he needs in his daily struggle for existence. One of the most important is to respect the great spirit of the sea, Nuliajuk, and follow the rules she makes.

A seal is believed to have a perishable body and an immortal soul. Thus the same seal can be caught again and again if the hunter pleases the soul. If all the proper taboos are followed when the seal is eaten, the same soul will come back to the hunter in a new body and allow itself to be caught.

The careful hunter always dips a bit of snow in the water bucket and lets the water drip into the seal's mouth. Because seals live in the salt water of the sea, they are always thirsty and will let themselves be killed just to get a drink of fresh water. The Netsilik believe that seals know where animals are treated well and always make their way to such people.

These rules apply only to the dark period in the middle of winter when food is most difficult to get. When spring comes and the sun is high in the sky, they are forgotten until the next winter.



April 20
Angatoks

Angatoks are people who have special powers to communicate with the spirits of the earth, the air and the sea. They can see things that other people cannot see, so they have power over others.

Angatoks can use their powers for good or for harm. They can help people in danger or men who have bad luck in hunting. Or they can send evil spirits to harm someone. Fortunately, they help often and only rarely do harm.

Winter is the time when rules are many and spirits are everywhere. It is the time when angatoks are most active. It was an occasion of great drama when an angatok would call all the people together into the large igloo. This happened when the hunting had been bad. In the most mysterious way, the angatok then tried to find out who had broken a rule and made the game go away.

The Netsilik say that they no longer have great angatoks. And certainly their angatoks are not necessarily leaders in the camp. Orpingalik was an exception. He was thought to be a powerful angatok, and at the same time he was a leader among the hunters.

April 20
Songs and Games in the Ceremonial Igloo

In the winter usually there are so many people in a camp that they cannot all gather in one family's igloo. Then the men build a special igloo large enough for the whole camp to come together. In this ceremonial igloo are held song feasts and drum dances and celebrations for the arrival of visitors.

A celebration is held only when there is enough food for the whole camp. Families first feast happily in their own igloos. They show their pleasure by eating as much as they can hold. Then everyone gathers in the ceremonial igloo for a night of singing and merriment.

Songs are an important part of the lives of the Netsilik. I rarely saw men or women working who were not humming a song. Even children make up songs and sing them to their playmates.

Care is taken to put the words of songs together so they sound graceful and still say what the person means. To compose a song, a man may go off by himself to hum the tune and fit the words together.

Songs express the thought and the moods of the people and keep them company on lonely journeys. They hum and sing in their igloos, too, just for the pleasure of it. Sometimes they sing to tell their feelings, and sometimes they

tell stories of great hunts in song.

In the evening in the ceremonial igloo, songs are sung to the beat of the drum. These may be stories in song, but often they are songs to make fun of someone, and not in a friendly way. These songs are a contest between two men who have become enemies. The men know all about each other and can tell about each other's weaknesses. They are hard on one another, but the real cruelty of the songs is the laughter of the people in the igloo.

Sometimes the songs of ridicule are followed by boxing or wrestling matches. In the boxing matches, one man hits, but the other does not try to defend himself. He simply waits his turn to strike his opponent. The man who stands the pain best is declared the winner. Often, after the enemies have sung and fought each other, they have brought out all their hidden feeling and can be friends again.

Other times wrestling takes the form of contests where one man tries to prove that he is stronger than another but in a friendly way. They may lock arms and try to pull the other over, or they may pull with a single finger.

There are other games, played by adults and children, men and women, that test skill or knowledge. A favorite is trying to put the point of a long sharp stick into a small hole drilled in a piece of bone or wood hung from the roof of the igloo. Another is like the cup-and-ball

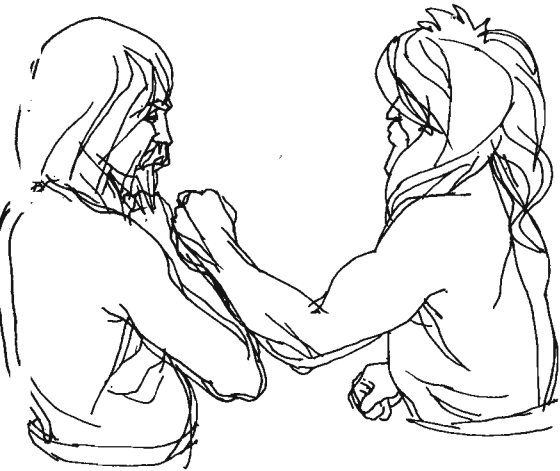




game we play, but it uses a pointed piece of bone and another piece of bone tied to it that is pierced with many small holes. The object is to throw the piece with the small holes and catch it on the pointed bone. At the same time the players tell a story in parts, with a part for each time the bone piece is caught.

A different kind of game shows their knowledge of the animals they hunt. The playing pieces are the many small bones in a seal's back flipper. At a signal the players grab as many pieces of bone from the pile as they can get and race to put them into the proper order for a live seal.

There are many other games they play often and enjoy, and many of them are very much like the games we remember from childhood. But these people do not give up the pleasure of their games as they get older. All ages play together, smiling and shouting with laughter.

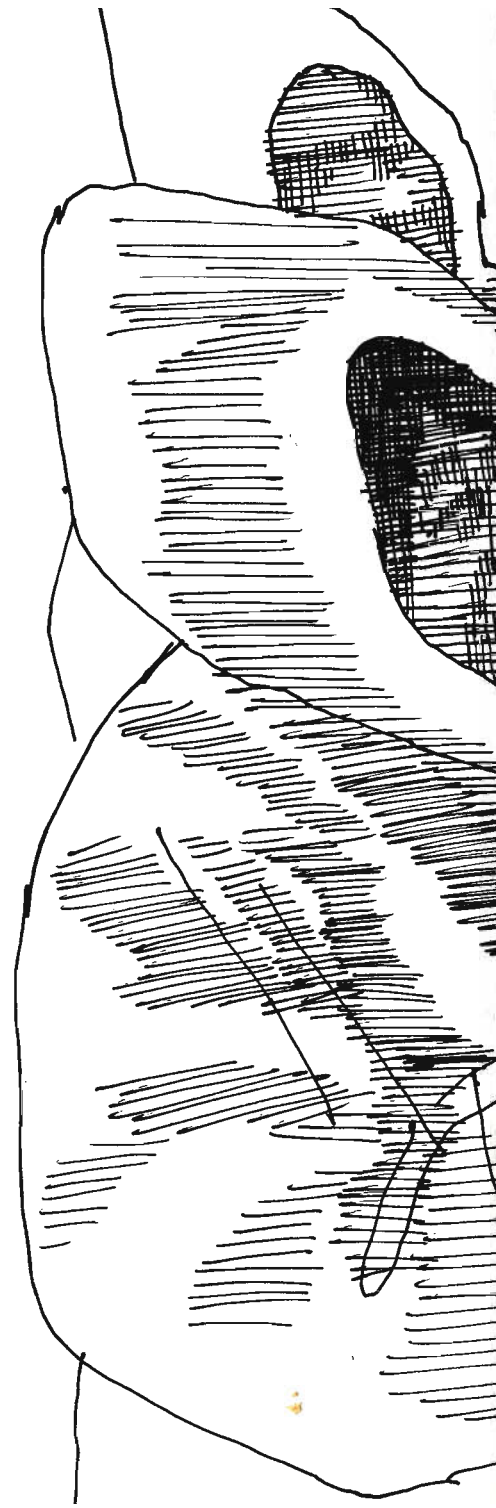


April 21
Song Partners

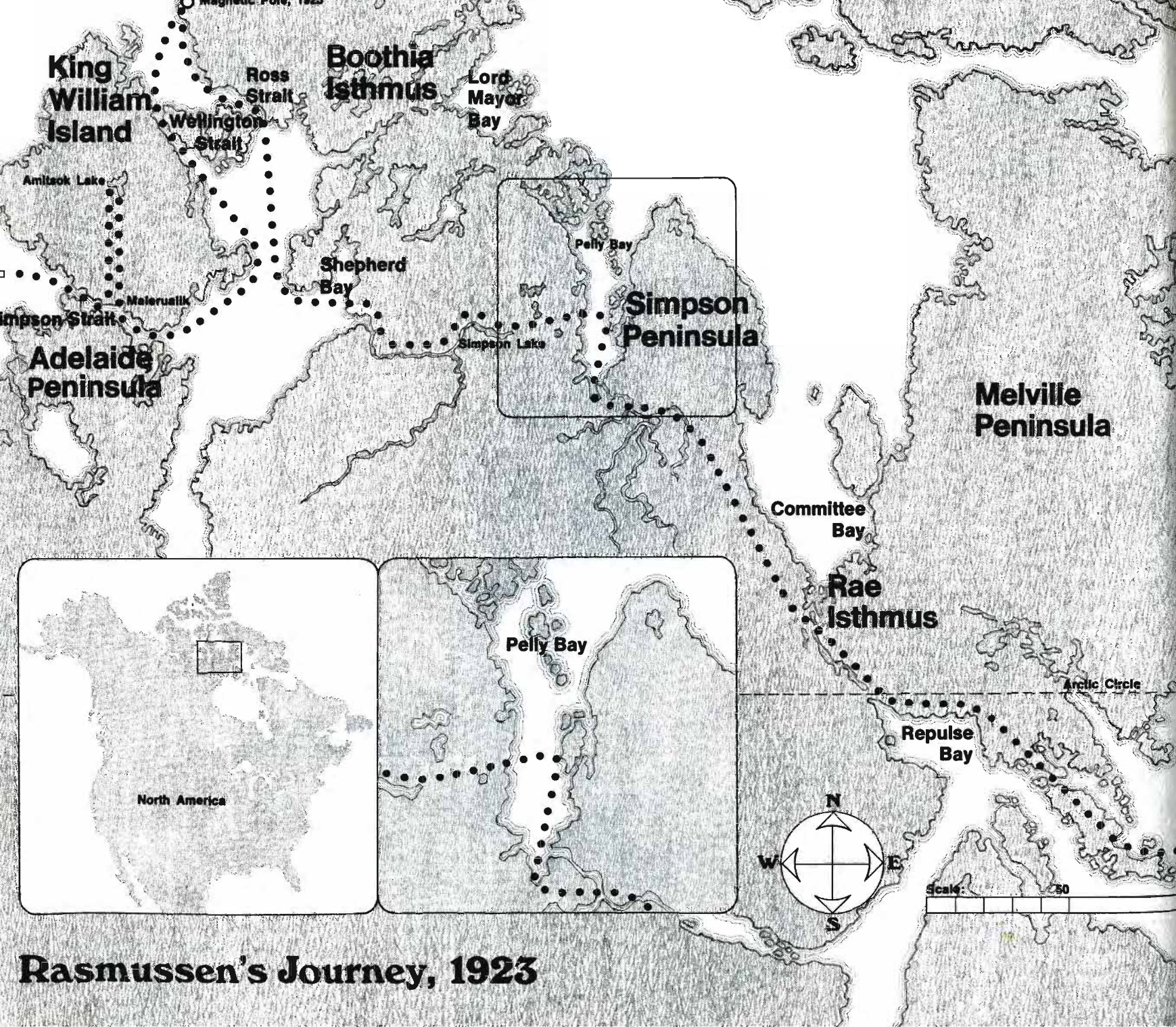
When all the people in the camp come together in the large igloo for a celebration, the men enjoy singing songs to praise or to make fun of one another. When a man finishes his song, he always hands the drum to the same man, his song partner. The song partner then sings a song in reply.

Song partnerships often last for many years, especially if the men come together at the same winter camp most years. However, disagreements may arise between partners. If the quarrel is bitter, the men may decide to break the formal partnership tie.

Two men who become song partners are very close to one another. They share certain privileges and have special obligations to each other and to their families. They are so closely bound together that they can exchange wives if they choose. These exchanges usually are for just a short time. If a man is about to set out on a journey and his wife is ill or unable to go with him, he can ask to borrow the wife of his song partner for the journey, leaving his own behind in exchange. He can also expect his song partner to lend him dogs or a sled, or to make his son a harpoon. This sharing of responsibilities is necessary in the nomadic life the Eskimos live.







Rasmussen's Journey, 1923

The Trail to Wellington Strait

April 23
At Pelly Bay

While we were still in Pelly Bay, two men suddenly appeared at our igloo. A terrible storm was raging, so their arrival surprised us greatly. They came inside the igloo to get warm, and when they had eaten they began to talk.

The men were two brothers from the area near the magnetic north pole, and they had come to see the people at Pelly Bay. One brother planned to visit in Pelly Bay, while the other, Kakortingnek by name, was going home at once. From him we heard of some people farther north who had many amulets. I decided to go with him so I could meet the amulet collectors.

April 24
Setting Off Across Boothia Peninsula

Early in the morning we packed up and headed off. We made our way slowly through a great river bed that runs between Pelly Bay on the east and Shepherd Bay on the west. Our goal was a camp on the ice between King William Island and Boothia Isthmus.

The first days were wintry, with a cutting

wind. But soon the temperature rose to 20° and the igloo gave place to the tent. We enjoyed the mild weather and took things easy.

The evenings we spent around the fire getting to know our new companion. As we became his friend, we felt that we were entering the life of his tribe. Kakortingnek was very intelligent and a first-rate map-maker. He had a thorough knowledge of the whole land of the Netsilik Eskimos, and I learned much from him. We all had a carefree feeling, like spring fever, and thought that we had chosen a lovely place to camp.

April 28
Simpson Lake

At Simpson Lake we found deserted igloos. Nearby, on platforms of snow, three kayaks were stored to keep them out of reach of animals that might gnaw their sealskin covering. The people had moved on some weeks before, but they would return this way later for their kayaks.

There were also some musk-ox skins stored there. This is the only region where there are enough musk oxen to make hunting them worthwhile.

May 4

The Edge of Shepherd Bay

The great plain joined the sea ice so smoothly that only a narrow crack in the snow announced that we were leaving land and going out on Shepherd Bay. Nothing else marks the line between the coast and the sea.

May 5

The Seal Skulls on the Ice

Early in the evening our dogs smelled something, and we halted at once. We caught sight of a long line of seal skulls laid on the ice with the noses all pointing in the same direction. The Eskimos ordered me to make a wide detour around the skulls. Once well past them, they explained that in this region the people believe that the dwelling place of the soul is the head. They also believe that the soul of a seal has everlasting life, living again from hunt to hunt, so that a man may kill the same seal many times. And so, when they move from an old camp to a new one, the skulls of the seals killed in the old one must be set out with their noses turned toward the new hunting ground. For then the seals can follow the hunters from place to place, and man will not suffer want.

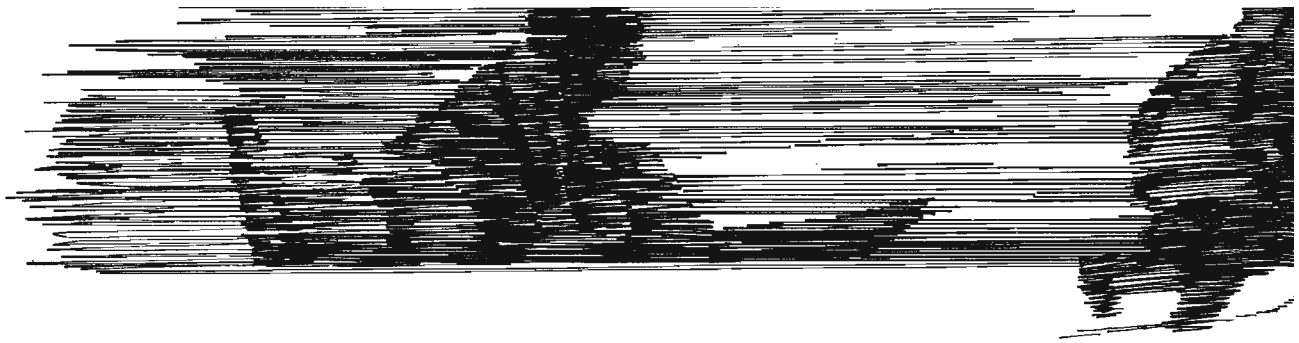
For us, this little arrangement of skulls was a compass showing the direction we had to follow to find the people we were looking for.

May 13

Following the Trail

Just opposite the magnetic north pole we found some deserted igloos. My guide was a skillful tracker who could recognize people from the way they built their igloos and how they slept on their sleeping platforms. He knew that we had found the trail of the people we were looking for. We followed the trail from the camp, again coming on the little patterns of seal skulls pointing the way.





The Camp in Wellington Strait

May 14
Finding the Camp

At two o'clock in the morning we thought that we and the dogs had earned a few hours' rest. We had just enough time to build an igloo before the storm that had been looming the day before broke over us.

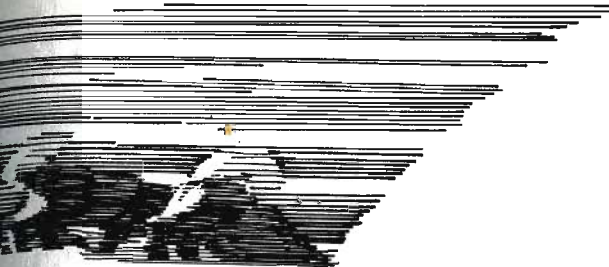
At eleven o'clock the same morning, although we could scarcely see more than a yard or two ahead on account of the thickly falling snow, we broke camp because the wind was with us. It was a curious sort of sled drive through Wellington Strait, because the sled was mostly ahead of the dogs, who crept timidly forward over the ice, fearing to be blown away. Face, eyes, nose, mouth and hair were so encrusted with fine snow that we could scarcely see. Now and then we would find the trail by lying flat down and scraping the snow away.

At precisely five o'clock the whole team suddenly disappeared from the surface of the ice! When we took a closer look, we found that they had rushed into the entrance of an igloo. We were in the middle of the very camp that we had been trying for days to find!

May 15
Meeting the People of the Camp

At this camp I hoped to start my collection of amulets. I wanted to purchase from the Eskimos many of the little things they wore and considered sacred. But I realized that I had to do this in a very careful way, so that later, after I had moved on, they would not blame me for any misfortunes that might happen to them.

The religion of these people is based on a constant struggle against the evil spirits that interfere in their daily lives. The spirits harm them by bringing sickness or bad hunting. To protect themselves against these dangers, the people have only their amulets and their magic



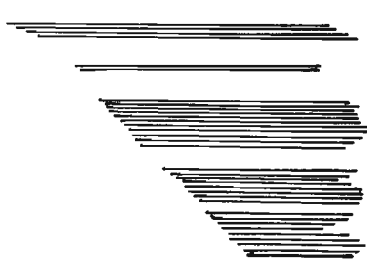
songs and words. That is why their amulets are so precious to them.

I spent the whole day going from igloo to igloo eating festive meals of salmon, caribou and seal meat. This, I thought, was a good way to begin my task, because sharing food helps gain people's confidence.

Meanwhile, my guide unpacked all my trade goods in our igloo. There were shining sewing needles, knives, files, thimbles, nails, tobacco and matches — things that were very common to us. But to these people, who were so far from our civilization, they were items of great value. I was happy to see that almost everyone in the camp came to my igloo-store sometime during the day.

May 15
The Old Angatok.

The evening of our first day with the people in Wellington Strait I spent talking with the oldest man in the camp. He was a famous old angatok who had led an adventurous life.



We spent much of the evening discussing religious problems. We talked about the miraculous powers of amulets, and I told him of my strange experiences among distant tribes where the people also put much faith in amulets. At the end of the evening we parted happily, each of us feeling that we had learned a great deal from the other.

When I returned to my igloo, I found it crowded with men and women. They had all brought trade goods — skins of white fox, wolverine and seal. There was a murmur of disappointment in the igloo when I told them that I was not trading my goods for the ordinary things.

I told them I wanted to learn the customs of the Eskimos. I had come to visit their tribe because they had the most powerful amulets of all the Eskimo peoples. Then I gave a short talk on amulets and their uses, referring to my conversation with their angatok and giving the names of powerful angatoks in other lands. I told them that in the opinion of their own angatok, the owner of an amulet did not lose its

protection if he lost it. The power of an amulet was magically attached to the person who had always worn it. Thus, the same would be true if the amulet were traded for goods its owner wanted and needed.

I made clear to the Eskimos that I did not want to wear the amulets myself. I only wanted to learn all about them and take them home to show my countrymen.

Again they offered me their furs, but in vain. I simply pointed to my stock and told them it was up to them whether we traded the next day. Then I asked them to leave, because we were tired and wanted to sleep. Through a peep-hole in the wall of the igloo I watched them go in small groups to the old angatok, whose friendship I knew I had already won.

May 16

The Trading Day

We slept late the next morning. But even after we moved the block of snow away from the entrance to our igloo, no one came to visit us. I was beginning to think that my task was hopeless, when a young girl came to the doorway. We called to her, and she crept in through the passage with all her amulets in a small bag of skin. Until just a few moments ago she had been wearing them in various places on her clothing.

I emptied the bag of its contents: odd small



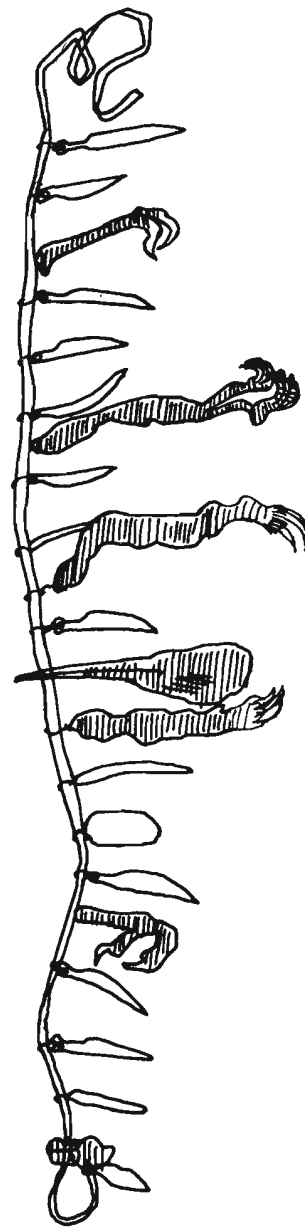


objects that smelled very badly. I pulled a long black swan's beak from the bag and asked her what it was for. She smiled shyly and answered, "So that the first child I have will be a boy."

Then came a ptarmigan head and foot, which meant that the boy would be a fast runner like a ptarmigan when he hunted caribou. A bear's tooth gave a powerful bite and good digestion; an ermine skin, with the skull of the animal, meant strength and skill. She still had one or two more, but she wanted to keep them in case of accidents.

While the girl was with us, several young men and women came in. At first they stood there giggling at the young girl. But their smiles disappeared when they saw what she got in return for her amulets. We gave her enough beads to make a necklace, two sewing needles, and a shiny thimble. When she left, she didn't hide her pleasure at the bargain she had made. As soon as she was gone, the others who had laughed dove out of my igloo. I knew then that the young girl's visit was just what I needed to make the others come with their amulets in hand.

For the next two hours there were so many people in my igloo that I was afraid the blocks of snow would burst apart. Before bedtime I was sold out in my shop. In that short day I had collected hundreds of amulets that would



teach me much more about these peoples' thoughts and beliefs.

My guide and I packed the amulets carefully. I wrote the information about each one in my diary, and we made ready to depart at dawn the next day.

May 16

The Amulet Collection

These amulets appeared often in my collection. The people felt they had the greatest value of all their amulets.

tern (a sea bird): to make the wearer a bold and successful fisherman

foot of a great northern diver (another sea bird): to make a man a skillful kayak paddler

raven's head and claws: to insure good shares during a hunt (because the raven is always present when an animal is killed)

teeth of a caribou: to make a good caribou hunter

a bee, sewn into the hood: for a strong head

a fly: for protection, because a fly is difficult to hit

the scaly stripe on a salmon skin: for small, strong stitches in sewing

This last was one of the few amulets intended for women. Women rarely wear amulets for their own protection, because the Eskimos feel that it is the men, not the women, who lead the most dangerous lives. Little girls at five or six start to wear amulets to protect the sons they will have someday, for the older an amulet is, the more powerful it becomes.

May 17

Leaving the Wellington Strait Camp

Early in the morning we heard voices outside our igloo. It was the old angatok, coming to speak to me. Because he trusted me, he said he had told his people to sell me their amulets. The goods they had received in trade were valuable indeed, but amulets were sacred property. From my tales of journeys in other lands, it was clear to him that I had great power over life. The part of a man with the greatest growing power was the hair, he said, so I should give a lock of my hair in return for each amulet.

Of course, the old man was right. But it was winter and I did not want to give up all my hair. We agreed that parts of one's clothing were also useful as amulets, so I gave up an old fur jacket and a shirt.

During the morning the old angatok gave away my jacket and shirt in small pieces. For the most powerful amulets he gave a bit of my hair, which he hacked off a tuft at a time with a blunt hunting knife, because scissors were unknown in that camp.

When we were through, I hardly looked like a gentleman!

Finally we set off, with cries of farewell from the people. I had not only acquired a unique collection, but I had made friends who felt that I had given more than I had taken.

A Trip North

May 18

North of King William Island

I hoped to spend the summer on King William Island, if several families of Netsilik Eskimos would plan to be there, too. I wanted to gather more information from them — especially the older members of the group. Fortunately for me, these people are happy to be with strangers who amuse them. They quickly let me know that they would come to the island.

I set off to explore to the north. This trip would take me near the magnetic north pole and along the whole north and northeast side of the island. Thus I could see the hunting grounds of the Netsilik in this region.

May 30

A Boy's First Seal

I came on a group of hunters gathering to eat the liver of a newly caught seal. They invited us to join them, and we were happy to have a warm bite. Later I bought the seal for the dogs. I had to pay a very high price for it, however, because it was the first seal caught by a young hunter. It was important that the soul of the seal feel that it was wanted and welcome among men. The people felt that it would be pleased to know that its meat had such a high

value. Later, when it became a seal again, it would allow itself to be caught over and over by the same hunter, as long as he lived. Thus the young boy would be assured of a successful future as a hunter.

June 1

The Old Woman and the Wish

On my way south I stopped briefly at a small camp on the ice. There I met a very old woman who spoke to me in a graceful way that was characteristic of her people:

“I have come to see a new person, a stranger who is a grown man. I was born before all the others of my tribe, so the only new people I see are always newly born.

“My name is Arnak. I am so old that I have nothing to pay you with. Yet I am a woman, and I need both sewing needle and thimble. If you give me these things I can only repay you with a wish. And that is: May you live long!

“But I would add another wish that comes from the experience that my age gives me: May you never be as old as I am!”

June 9

The End of the Trip

The ice is becoming soft and watery. I must hurry on so I can reach the south of the island before travel by sled becomes impossible.

King William Island: Fishing

June 20

Spring on King William Island

All over King William Island spring has come and the trails are melting rapidly. Away from the sea and up over the first hills the country is like one great plain. Among the many small lakes and rivers, there are marshes, bogs and soggy meadows of grass. When we arrived, the swamps were full of birds building their nests and laying eggs. On the ice in Simpson Strait, small dark patches bobbed up. Sometimes they were birds; sometimes they were seals basking in the sun on the ice.

The snow was still lying in drifts in the shade of the rocks, but in every place where it had melted red saxifrage was in bloom, greeting the warmth of the sun as the first flowers to overcome the winter. Everything seemed to be growing, and even the stony ground gave

promise of the summer that was coming.

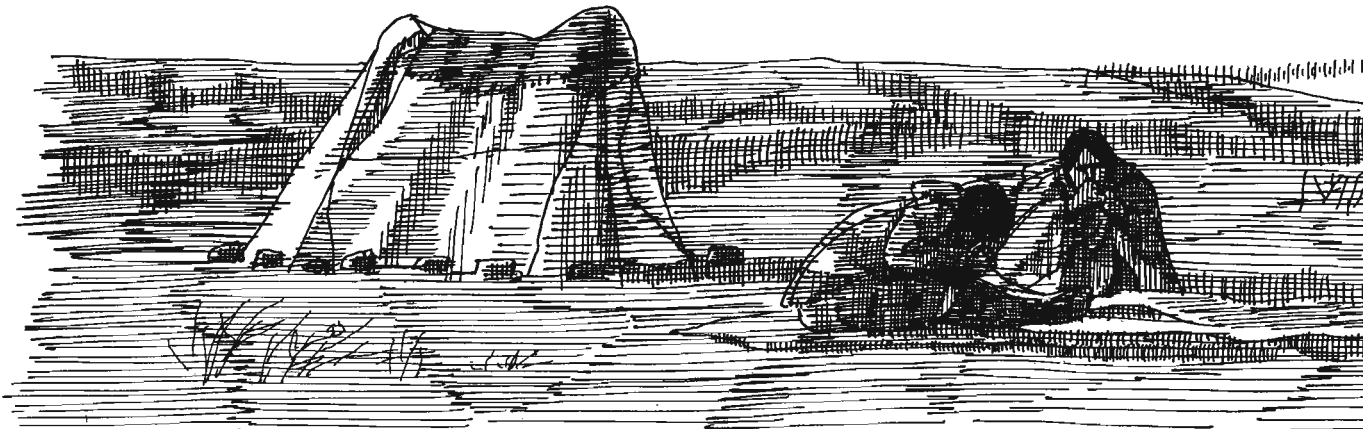
On a quiet, sunny day like this there is no feeling of being in the world's most rigorous region.

June 26

Arctic Summer

The Netsilik divide their year between hunting sea animals and hunting on land. About the middle of June, after the last seal hunts on the melting ice, they move to the shore and dry their clothing. Everything is made ready for the great season, summer and autumn, that will be spent fishing for trout and hunting for caribou.

As soon as the snow has melted away, the people move inland for the summer. This is the time of the tent camps near lakes and rivers. It is the happiest season of the year, with sunshine and plenty, happy games and contests. The old people feel young again and gather strength against the darkness and the frost of winter.



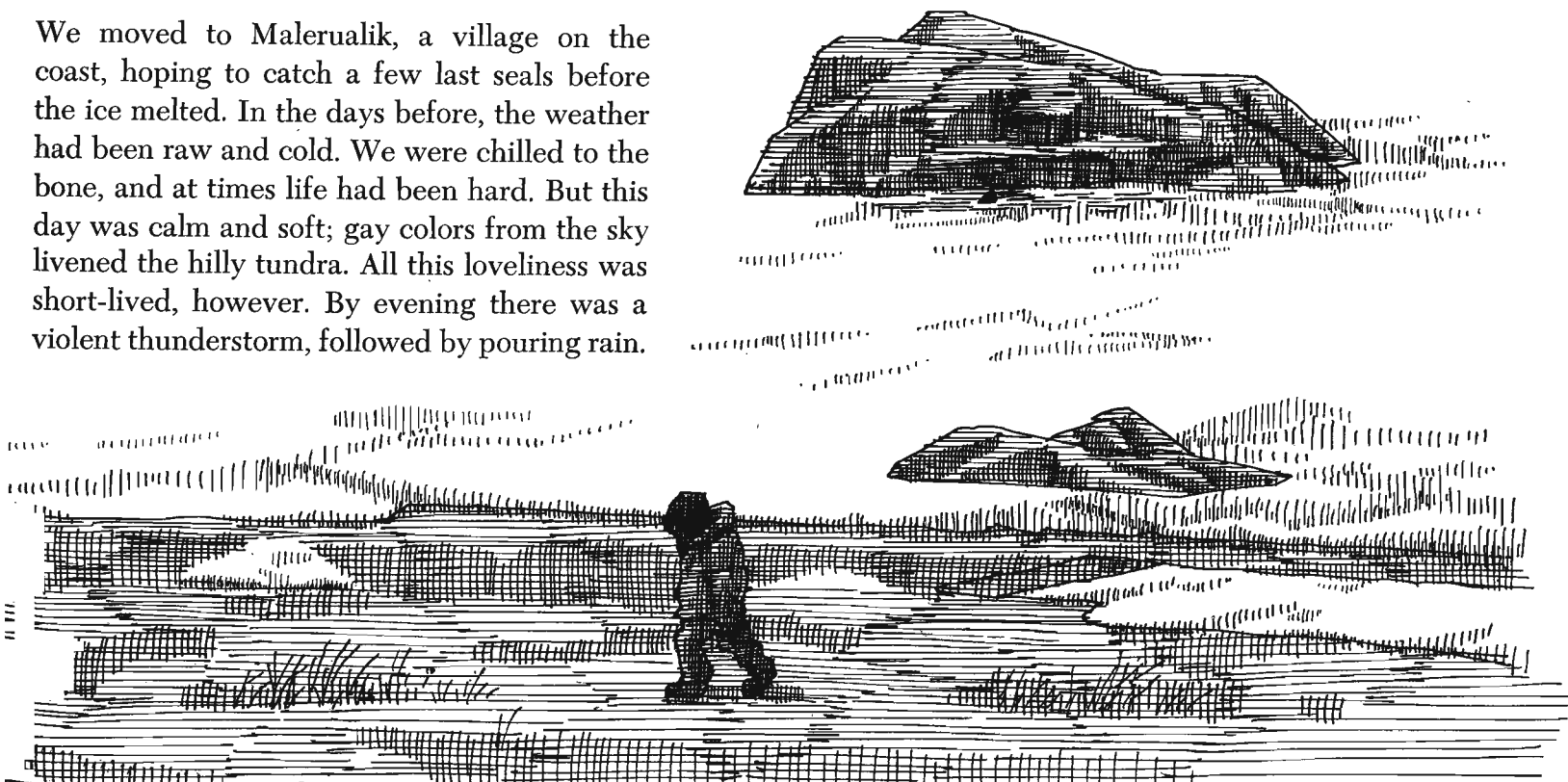
Early in the season fish is the main food. But there is some caribou hunting once in a while with bow and arrow. The hunters hide themselves behind stone walls they had built right up to the paths usually followed by the animals. There they lie for days and wait for an animal to come by.

It is not until the end of August or early September that they move to the crossing places where they hunt caribou from kayaks. It is at those places that the large kill is made.

July 1
Malerualik

We moved to Malerualik, a village on the coast, hoping to catch a few last seals before the ice melted. In the days before, the weather had been raw and cold. We were chilled to the bone, and at times life had been hard. But this day was calm and soft; gay colors from the sky livened the hilly tundra. All this loveliness was short-lived, however. By evening there was a violent thunderstorm, followed by pouring rain.

This is the place where great herds of caribou gather in the fall. They come together just before they cross Simpson Strait on their migration south, because from here the distance to the mainland is shorter than from any other place on the island. The Eskimos can count on getting many caribou here, so it is a favorite hunting spot in the fall.



July 10

Poor Hunting Forces a Move

We knew that it would be difficult to hunt in this area at this time of year, because most of the caribou had moved inland, farther north. We had one good hunting day, but when the food from that day ran out, it was impossible to get more. We had to move or go hungry.

July 25

Moving Inland

We had made up our minds to journey inland to the fishing places where the Eskimos find their summer food. It was quite a sight when we left the camp carrying all our gear and using the dogs to carry some, too.

It is no easy matter to make a dog carry a pack. The load is put on the dog's back in two equal parts. If one side is the least bit heavier than the other, the load is soon trailing on the ground. Dogs not used to carrying packs do everything they can to shake them off. Some lie on their backs and try to wriggle themselves free, while other more crafty animals simply wade out into a lake and lie down there. This means that to keep baggage dry it must be loaded on dogs that are reliable.

During the first few days of our trip I was not sure whether the help we received from our four-legged pack carriers was worth it!



August 1

The Swan on the Lake

We came as far as a big lake before we stopped. The day's walk was over stony ground, and we were very sore-footed.

On the great lake in front of us, a lone swan glided about. I know of no creature that can beautify its surroundings as can this bird with such proud bearing. The wild mountain lake and the deserted landscape suddenly seemed to be like a great park, and we were delighted by the sight.

August 5

Amitsok Lake.

We arrived at Amitsok, the most famous of all the fishing places on King William Island, to find that there were few fish. The best fishing was still some weeks off.

Amitsok itself is a most dreary lake, connected to another without a name by a stream no more than fifty feet wide. All the land around the lake is flat and stony.

Just after we arrived at the camp, the wind died and we enjoyed a day or two of the hot weather that is so rare. These beautiful days refreshed us all, and the time was passed in playing games of all kinds. Little children ran around naked and even went swimming in the cold lake.

Here I learned much about the summer joys of the Netsilik. Life around my tent was so active and gay that I understood how a fishing place can become famous, even if sometimes the fishing is poor. We who came from Greenland where there is fine and settled weather in the summer, thought that here it had been a cold and windy summer. But it was the kind of weather these Eskimos were used to. To us it seemed that it was always cold and raining, and that clear weather was rare. The Eskimos, who had just escaped from the storms of winter and spring, thought that the sun was always shining.

August 7

Fishing at the Stone Weir

The first thing in the day at the fishing camp is getting the daily food. This takes only ten minutes twice or three times a day. Even these few minutes of work are a sport, with contests and pranks and deafening laughter.

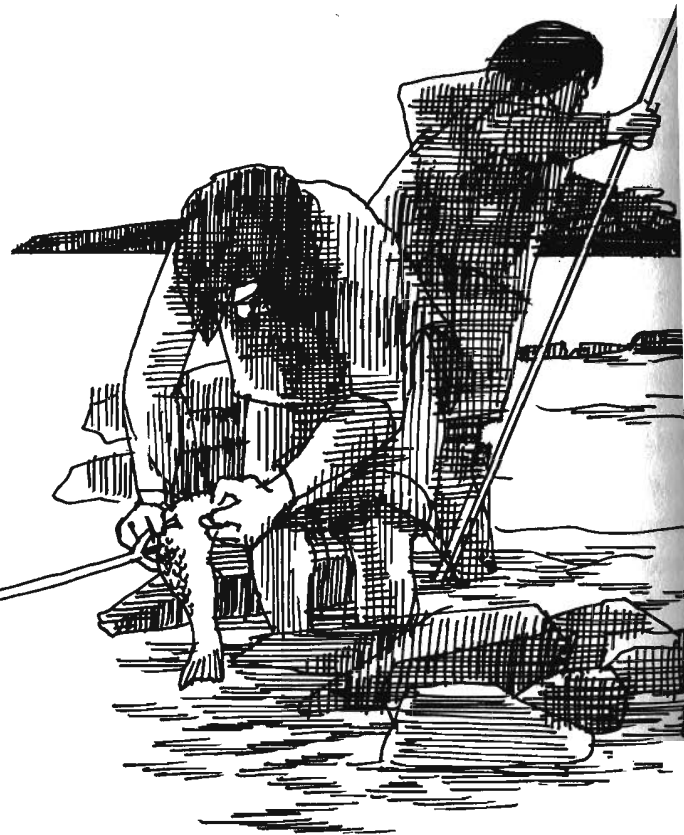
The fish are caught in the stream between the two lakes. A stone dam had been built across the stream. Out in the middle was an oval of stones thirty feet long. This oval trap has an opening at the end facing the upper lake. The fish that try to swim upstream go into the trap instead and cannot get out.

The fish usually come at midnight or early in the morning before sunrise, or sometimes late in the afternoon when the sun is low. The Eskimos catch them at these times only. Fishing is forbidden the rest of the day, for then the fish are to be left in peace.

Everyone fishes at the same time. No one goes to the stream until the leader of the fishing shouts that the time has come. (The leader at the fishing camp is always the head of the family at that camp.) His cry is greeted with joyous howls, and everyone — men, women and children — runs to the river. They all stop at the bank and let a few men walk out into the stream. These men scare the last few fish toward the dam and then close the trap with a large flat stone. As soon as the stone is in place, fishing begins.

The whole impatient group of people tumble into the icy river and begin to fish. The fish dash wildly about between the legs of the Eskimos who stab away with their leisters. There is no system. The aim is to be the one who catches the most fish. It is a mystery to me how in all this confusion the people preserve their toes.

Each fisherman holds his leister in one hand, and in the other he carries a long bone needle on a thong with a piece of wood at the other end. He strings the fish on the thong as he catches them and then moves on, trailing his





line of fish behind. Late in the summer there are often so many fish at Amitsok that every family can build three or four caches for the hard winter months ahead.

August 8

Rules for Fishing Time

Amitsok and all other important fishing places are considered "holy," just like the crossing places of the caribou. This is because these rivers and lakes provide stores of food that the Eskimos could not do without.

Nuliajuk, the great spirit of the sea, is believed to keep strict watch upon man's doings at a fishing river. As a result, fishing has special taboos, and breaking one may be fatal. One rule is more important than all the others: while fishing is going on, women are forbidden to do any sewing in their tents and men must not repair their tools. No skins can be worked on at all, not even to patch a tear or mend a hole. That is why the people were all dressed in ragged dirty clothing left over from the winter before.

The only sewing that can be done is the patching of boots, and then the patches that might be needed have to be cut before the people leave the sea coast. And a fishing tool that was needed could be patched in an emergency. These two things could not be done at

the camp, however, but had to be taken some distance from the river and done in the shelter of a big rock.

August 10

The Happy Life at the Fishing Camp

The Netsilik imagine the "Land of the Blessed" as a place where joy never dies and where every day is for play. It seems that this heaven exists at fishing places. Every single day all the people played and laughed together for many hours.

A thing to be celebrated was a boy's first catch. Even though he was very young and his mother did most of the catching, there were great cries to announce to the camp that he had caught his first fish. Later there was a feast of trout, arranged in the usual manner with the women eating in one group and the men in another. They never eat together; eating with the women might bring bad luck to the hunters.

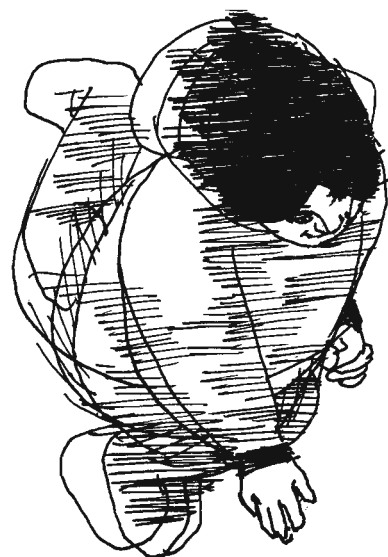
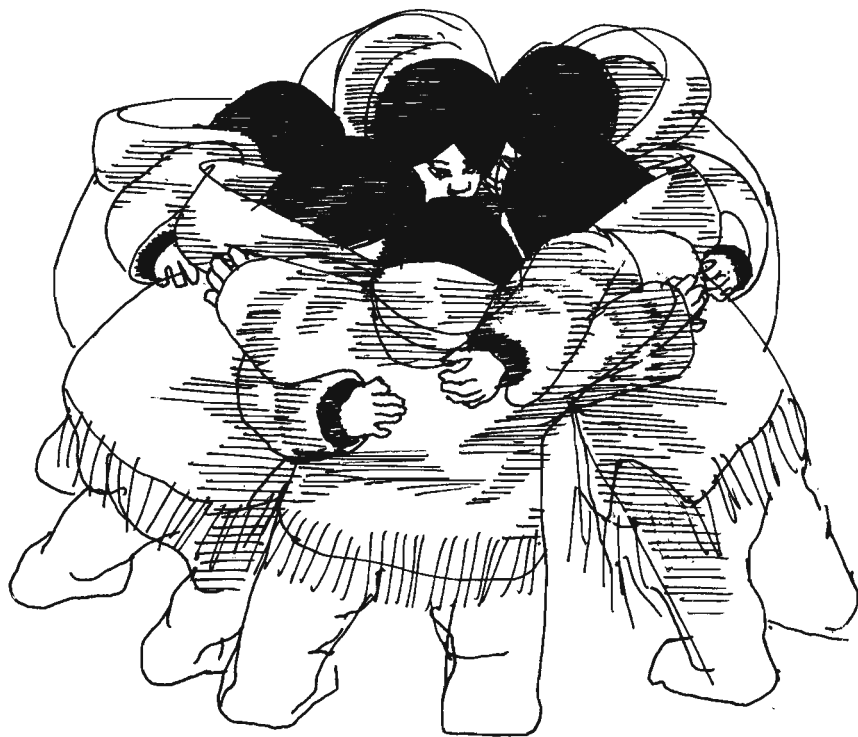
Everyone does what he pleases at this happy place. Hard work is for the long cold winter. A favorite pastime is playing games, and quite naturally the people choose games that give both warmth and exercise.

A favorite game I watched was a cross between tag and hide-and-seek. All the players stand in a tight circle with heads together

while one hides. When he is found he is chased. The first one to touch him must then hide, so the game starts over. There was a ball game in which many took part in pairs. Each set of partners tried to throw the ball from one to another. Every kind of trick was allowed. They fought with other pairs, tripped them up and pushed from behind, with shrieks of laughter all the time. Once started, this game might last the whole day.

In one curious game, the children imitated the action of angatoks and made fun of the fear of evil spirits — all with great humor. Although this game was hardly respectful of their religious beliefs, the adults howled with laughter. They seemed to enjoy seeing the serious, hard things of life made fun of. When I asked one Eskimo whether it was wise to make fun of the spirits, he was surprised at my concern. He answered that certainly the spirits understood a joke.

Never in my life have I seen such happy people so gaily going hungry, so cheerful in their ragged summer clothing.



King William Island: Caribou Hunting

August 14

Inland on King William Island

As we left the fishing place and went toward the coast, we saw more and more caribou. Unfortunately, they were lone animals and were so shy that sometimes we had to spend half a day stalking one.

These long hunts took us far from the spot where we had camped. Often it was difficult to find our way back, because here away from the sea one place looked just like another. There was an inukshuk on almost every ridge, marking a good lookout place. But the inukshuks were so much alike, and the valleys in between so much the same, that we could never be sure how far we had come.

The Eskimos said the inukshuks were built by the Tunrit, a people of long ago who are remembered by the works in stone they left all through the Netsilik's land. They are always described as big, strong people who were so good-natured that they were almost timid. They were easily frightened and took flight when danger threatened. That is why they are no longer here where they built inukshuks on the high ridges all across the island.



August 17
Malerualik

We came back to our old camping place and found our supplies in good order. When our tent was up, we had a cozy feeling of being home again. As the Eskimos say, "We were again surrounded by the smell of our own things."

It was hard to make up our minds to go to bed this night, because the evening was so beautiful. Suddenly, to make it even more so, nine caribou led by an enormous bull leaped out from behind some rocks near our tent and disappeared in a cloud of dust across the plain.

August 25
The First Snowstorm

Autumn is surely upon us. Today we had a violent storm bringing the first snow of the season. The ground is freezing up, and there is ice on all the ponds. It is close to the time when the caribou will start their migration south.

September 1
How the Eskimos Use the Caribou

All of the caribou's body is valuable to the Netsilik Eskimos. The skin, with its warm fur, makes clothes and blankets. The meat of the

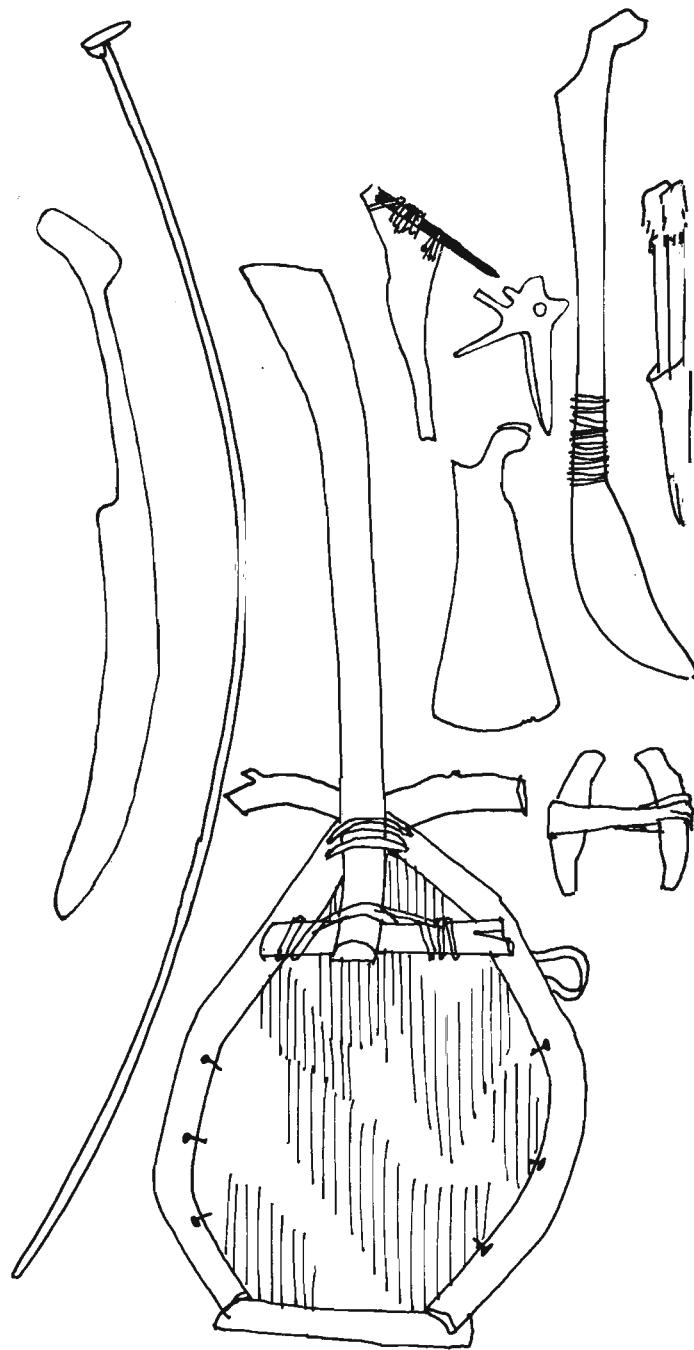


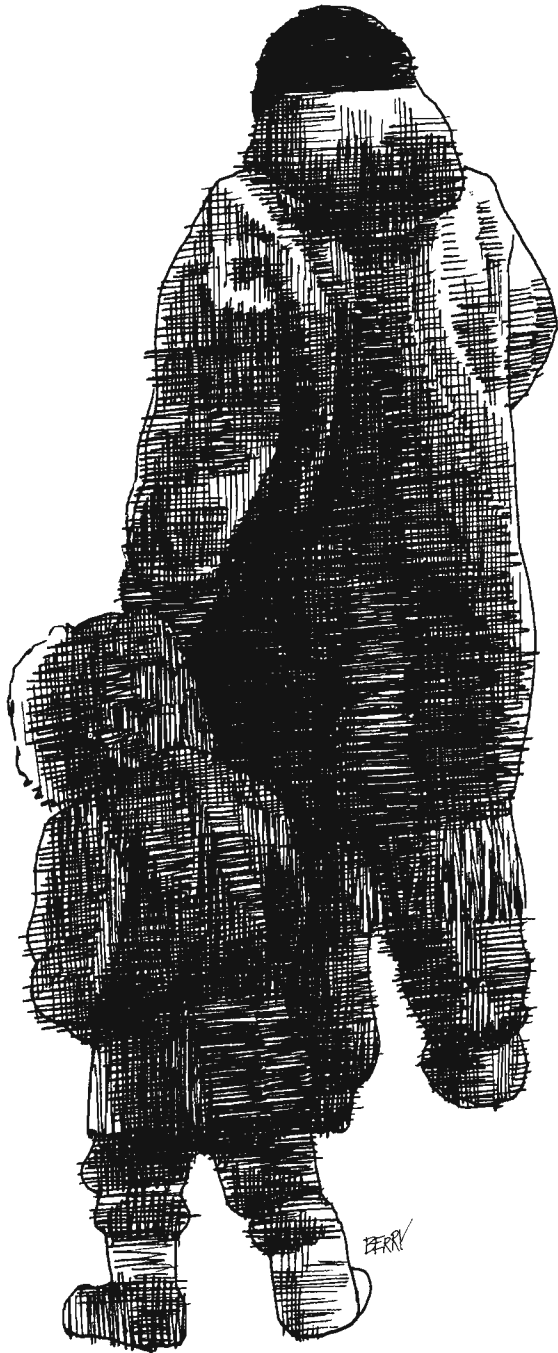
animal provides food all through the early fall and even longer if the hunt was so good that some meat could be stored away for winter.

No less valuable than the meat and the skin of the caribou are the animal's bones and antlers. From these Eskimos make tools — skin scrapers and antler straighteners, for example. Other tools are made partly of bone or antler and partly of other materials. These tools include spears and bows and knives and many others. Bone is very hard and strong, but it becomes brittle as it dries. Antler is very tough and does not become brittle, so it is used for any tool that has to be flexible. Without caribou bones and antlers, an Eskimo could not make the weapons to kill more caribou and the other animals he needs to survive.

September 4 *Caribou Skins*

It is a great and constant problem for the Eskimos to get enough skins for the winter. A hunter's coat requires four skins and his trousers two. Another is needed for boots. This makes seven skins for a grown man. In the coldest weather, he also needs an inner suit, taking another six skins. His wife needs six skins for her winter clothes, and each of their children needs three or four skins. This means that a family of five needs about thirty-five





skins for winter outfits, and the skins for these outfits must be of the best quality from animals killed in the early fall, the only time the fur is suitable for clothing. In addition, it is good if a man can have an extra set of clothing, because he is out in all sorts of weather in the worst of the winter.

But this is not all. There also must be rugs for the sleeping platform — at least six — and no less than three sleeping skins for the family. Thus a family with three half-grown children must have between forty and fifty caribou skins for its basic needs.

But one should not be greedy when hunting caribou. Not often does a hunter get more skins than he and his family need. But if he has an extra skin that his family does not need, he will give it away to a relative or friend who has not been as fortunate.

September 5

Rules for Caribou-hunting Time

A man who has to get so many skins to keep his family and his relatives warm must be a skillful, energetic hunter. Besides that, he must be on good terms with the souls of the animals.

While the caribou are being hunted, their skins can only be dried, not cured or sewn. There is a strict taboo against sewing until all the animals have left the country.





Caribou meat cannot be cooked over a fire that burns driftwood or animal bones. This would pain the animal's soul. And no grass can be used to start a fire for cooking caribou meat, for caribou live on grass. It would shock their souls for the fire to be lighted with their own food.

The soul of a caribou is very tender in the skin of the legs. Thus only a man's wife, never a stranger, should prepare the skin of the legs, which will be used for mittens and boots.

A caribou killed with a bow and arrow can never be eaten on the same day that seal meat is eaten. In fact, the two should not even "sleep" in the same tent or igloo, the people believe.

In the wintertime there is a strong taboo against sewing on caribou skins in seal hunting camps. But if this taboo were broken, it would harm the seal hunting, not the caribou hunting that was many months off.

September 6

The Caribou Migration Begins

Caribou have such fixed habits that every year the start of their migration can be predicted almost to the day. After the first snowfall in September, the animals gather into herds of from twenty-five to a hundred or more. As ice begins to form on the lakes, they move slowly south.

When the increasing cold has covered the lakes and rivers with ice, the great trek begins.

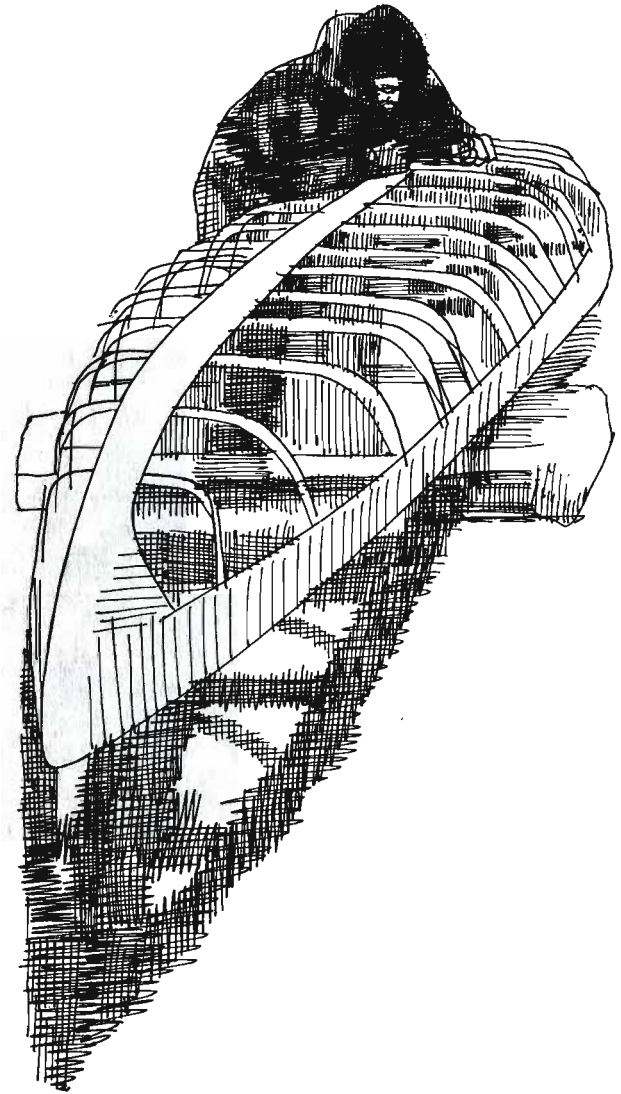
The caribou always follow certain definite routes. Where they must cross long stretches of water, their route goes by way of an island, if there is one, to shorten their swim. All along the route, along the beaches and in mountain passes, there are inukshuks and hiding places the Eskimos use when hunting with bow and arrow. Here the hunters wait patiently, for they know the caribou have no other route than this. The whole settlement has to be organized as a group to hunt this way. Although it is a slow process and does not bring many kills, it has been used by generations of Netsilik Eskimos.

September 8

Hunting Caribou by Kayak

The greatest harvest of caribou is always reaped in autumn, when herds are driven out into lakes and crossing places, pursued in kayaks and killed with long slender spears. It is important to be a fast paddler, because the caribou are pursued only when they are well on their way across the river or the lake. If a paddler starts immediately after they have jumped into the water, they may swim ashore again and escape before the hunt has begun.

In the water any kayak man can catch up with a swimming caribou without difficulty. But there is always a race in which each man



tries to leave the other hunters behind and be the first to thrust his spear into the animals. Not only does the respect of his fellow hunters depend on this race, but so do his meat supplies and winter clothing — the welfare of a whole year.

The Netsilik kayak holds one man, and it is used on lakes and streams, not on the sea. It is covered with sealskins because they are waterproof. It takes about six sealskins to make the cover, and these skins are prepared in a special way to make them as light as possible.

The frame of the kayak is made of wood, if enough wood can be found. Sometimes pieces of antler have to be used instead. The women sew the skins together in such a way that water cannot get in at the seams. It is the men's work to stretch the skins over the frame, because this takes much strength. If the skins are not stretched tightly, the kayak will not go through the water quickly and quietly.

A kayak paddler can wear several amulets to make him a better paddler, and even the kayak itself may have an amulet. A kayak amulet is usually the skin of a very fast-moving animal or bird, especially a water bird.

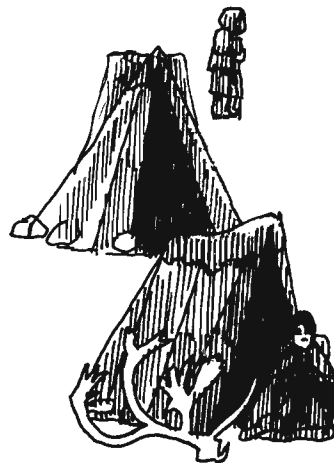
September 11 *Sharing the Caribou*

The hunter who first spears a caribou gets the skin, even though another hunter may actually kill the animal. Besides the skin, the hunter gets a small part of the meat. As in seal hunting, the hunter ends up with a smaller share of the meat. If two men were after the same caribou, the one who kills it gets the front half of the animal and the other the back half.

Sharing of caribou meat depends on the supply of meat in the camp. If there is plenty, the rules are not observed very carefully. On the other hand, it is not considered polite for a hunter to store away all his meat for himself. He must be sure that all his relatives have food. And then, if there is enough, he should give any visitors at the camp a small feast.

The share of the beaters, who drive the animals to the crossing place, also depends on need. If a large number of animals are killed in a short time, the beaters receive one out of every five. But if the kill is smaller, they do not get a regular share. Each beater simply eats with the family of the hunter he is related to.

It is always the men who skin and cut up caribou. This rule is always followed for fear of bad luck in hunting if it is not. The women of the camp dry the skins and prepare the precious sinew for thread.



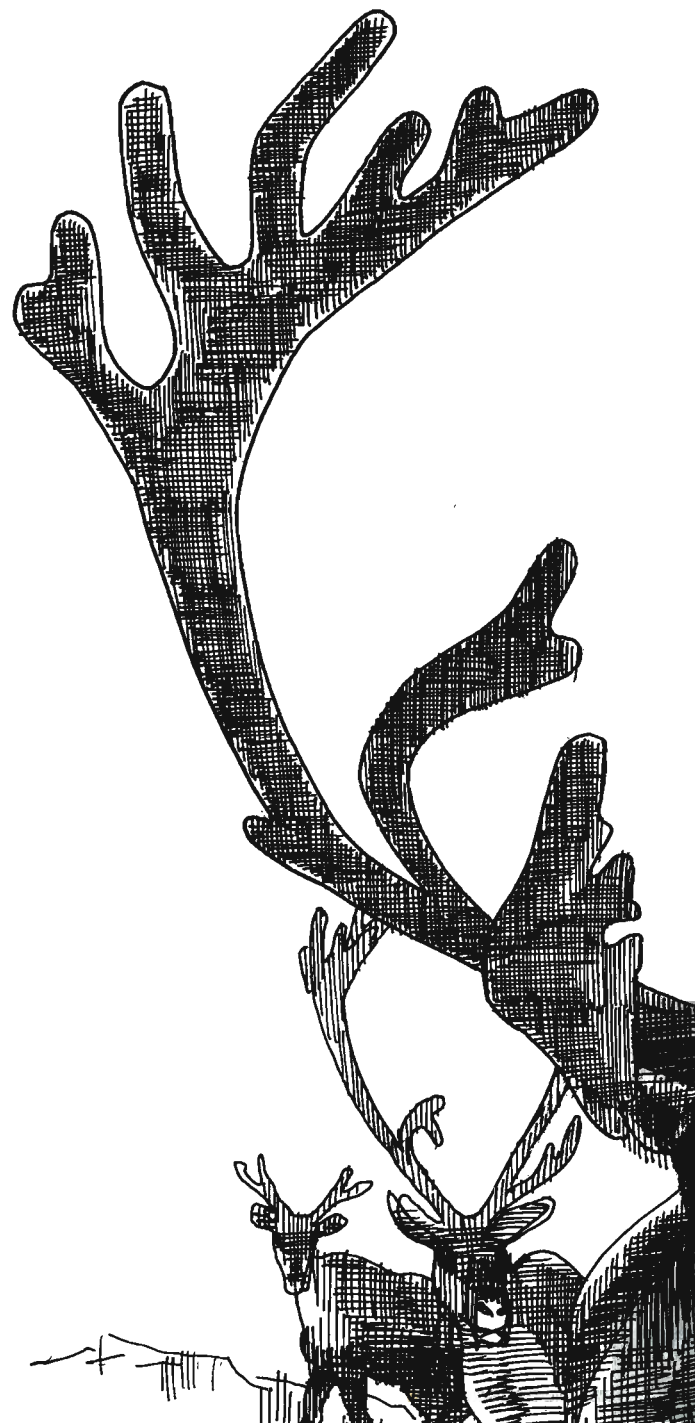
September 12

People Gather for the Hunt

Hunting at Malerualik is quite different from hunting by kayak at a crossing place. Many caribou cross Simpson Strait to King William Island in the spring. In the fall, then, they must cross again on their migration south. During the migration the area around is filled with thousands of animals heading south. Many Eskimos gather to hunt, so the hunting camp is larger than a camp at a crossing place would ever be.

The Eskimos always know what kind of hunting to expect. They know how many caribou went north in the spring, so they know how many will come back in the fall. This year the caribou had collected in large numbers on King William Island, so the people looked forward to the hunt with great excitement.

Eskimos who had been scattered inland for the summer came down to the coast to be ready for the hunt. Relatives came together from near and far. A few even came over from Adelaide Peninsula on the mainland, ferrying across Simpson Strait in the most ingenious way. They sewed together caribou skins and stuffed the inside with platform rugs and old clothing. This made a float that could carry a heavy load.





September 15

The First Caribou Arrive

Early in the morning a shout echoed through the camp. When we rushed out, we saw the first great herd of caribou trotting down over the hills east of the settlement. At a distance they looked like a great army of animals moving toward us, heading directly toward the strait. All the men seized their weapons, and in a moment they were hidden here and there among the rocks the animals would have to pass.

This was the first real caribou hunt of the autumn, and therefore the animals were not suspicious as they trotted down toward the shore. As soon as the first animals were killed, the others stopped still, gazing bewildered here and there for the enemies they could not see. This moment of hesitation gave the hunters another chance. Finally, the frightened animals split into small groups and galloped back toward the interior of the island.

September 18

Hunting Caribou with Bow and Arrow

For a few days after the first herd came south, few caribou appeared. They were still frightened by the first hunt. The hunters waited patiently, hiding along the routes they knew

the caribou would have to follow.

So much snow had fallen by this time that we could use sleds to travel. Quite early in the morning we started inland to stalk caribou on the tundra. As soon as we were a little way from the coast, we began to see herds everywhere. The animals were restless, because the time had come for them to set out on their long migration. Yet they seemed reluctant to leave their summer pastures.

It was magnificent weather, cold and clear. The sun was shining over the newly fallen snow and the sky was dazzling. For a long time we feasted our eyes on the sight of the splendid animals. Seen against the white autumn snow, they seemed to us to be the most beautiful animals on earth.

We separated so we would not scare the herds and began the long job of creeping up close enough for a shot. To get within range of the caribou, each man had to choose a herd that was located in such a way that he could move around without being seen or smelled by the animals.

By evening we had managed to kill seven fat animals — a good number for that kind of hunting. As we drove from the successful hunt, we knew that we would eat well for a long time.

September 29

A Hunting Story

The Eskimos have many tales of famous hunters. Even if the stories do no more than tell of quickness and endurance, the names of some of the old hunters are spoken with real respect. The men in the stories are so admired by the Eskimos that they try to be like them. This story was told me by my guide.

There was a man named Kaluarsuk who lived long ago. His name will never be forgotten, for no one could paddle a kayak as quickly as he. If he set out with other hunters after caribou at a crossing place, he usually killed most of the animals by the time the others caught up to him. No one could understand how he could always get there first, for he was not especially strong and was no bigger than a boy. But he had a will that nobody could overcome. He chose to be first, and he was first.

It hadn't always been that way. This is how Kaluarsuk became famous.

When hunting caribou at the crossing places, usually the kayaks were concealed on the shore across the lake until the animals were driven into the water. There was always a race. Two brothers, sons of Kuvkilik, had become famous for their quickness and their arrogance.

Often Kaluarsuk hunted caribou at the same crossing place with Kuvkilik's two sons. He set off in his kayak the same time the brothers did when the caribou swam across. But he was always left far behind. Finally, he got in the habit of shouting:

"Kuvkilik, dear old Kuvkilik, I can't keep up

with your sons. Please give me a little meat for my wife to put into our empty pot."

Kuvkilik answered happily, "You are right! No one can paddle as fast as my sons."

Once when autumn was approaching, Kaluarsuk's wife said, "How is it that you never catch a caribou?"

"I'm only waiting for them to be nice and fat," he answered.

One day he took down his old fashioned kayak paddle with hollows for the hands where one holds the paddle. He hid himself at the crossing place. He had just got down to his kayak when two caribou bulls jumped out into the water. The men who were waiting to pursue them held back

until the caribou were far enough out that they could see water between the swimming caribou and the land. When Kaluarsuk pushed off, one of Kuvkilik's sons said mockingly:

"Go on, paddle after the caribou as fast as you can. You are only waiting for them to be so nice and fat that you can be bothered to kill them."

The two brothers laughed, for they were sure that Kaluarsuk would not paddle fast enough to kill the caribou. But Kaluarsuk got there first and killed both of the big bulls with his spear.

From that day Kaluarsuk was always the fastest kayak paddler in the Netsilik tribe. The two brothers were always left far behind, and their old father Kuvkilik shed many a tear over it.



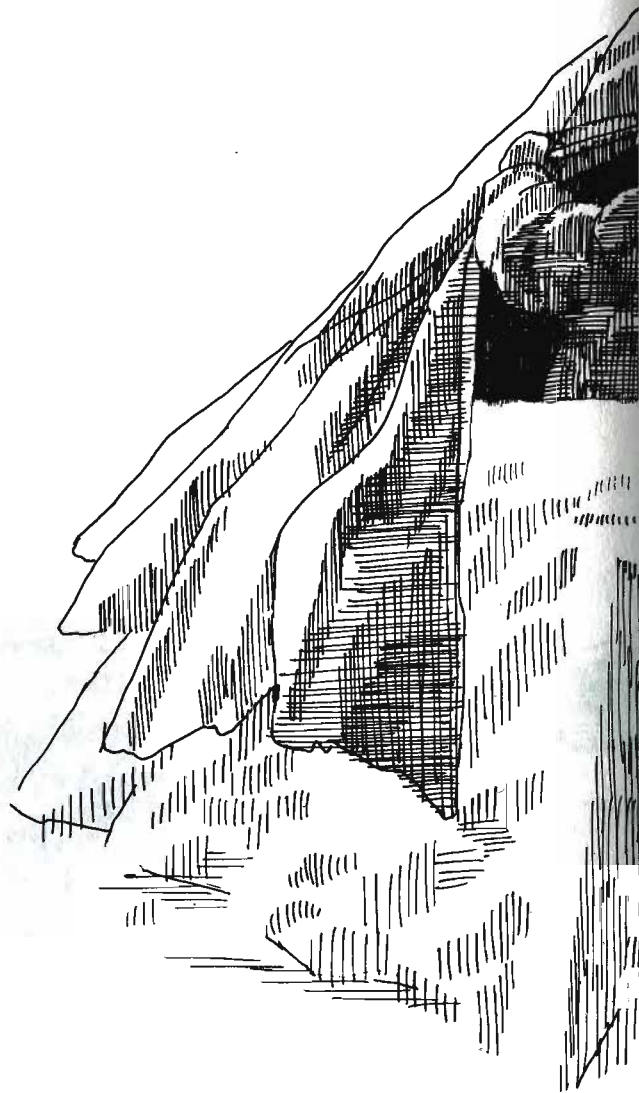
October 6

Hunting Caribou in Winter and Spring

In winter, when it is cold and snowy, it is difficult to hunt the few caribou that stay in the north. To be certain of hitting an animal, a hunter has to be not more than fifty yards away. The creaking of the cold snow makes it hard to get this close, because the caribou's hearing is so good.

The cold interferes in another way, too. Even if the hunter has special fingered mittens for handling the bow and arrow, his fingers become numb before long. And no hunter can survive lying motionless hour after hour on the snow when the wind is blowing and the temperature goes to 50 degrees below zero or even lower. It is such a feat to kill a caribou in the winter that songs are composed about it.

Not until June do the big herds make their way northward again. At this time many caribou can be killed, but the animals are lean so the meat does not go far. And in the spring the animals are shedding their thick winter fur, so the skins are useless for clothing.



Heading West

October 8

Winter Sets In

Autumn has been most unsettled and stormy, with quick changes of weather. Early in September it froze and there was thin ice on the lakes. Snow covered the land. Just as we thought that winter had come for good, rain set in, and the ice and snow melted away. Then the winter began again. Thin ice formed over Simpson Strait, the lakes froze over, and snow lay over all the land.

October 10

Karmaks

In the fall, there is often a time when it is cold but the snow is not deep enough or well enough packed to build an igloo. When this happens, the Eskimos build ice or snow houses, *karmaks*. Karmaks are not nearly as warm as igloos, but they are much warmer than tents.

To make an ice karmak, the Eskimos cut slabs of ice a yard long out of a river or lake. To cut it out, they make a row of holes along what will be an edge of the slab. Then they jump and stamp on the ice until the block comes loose. They string thongs through holes in the corners of the blocks to drag them to the shore.





When there is a bit of snow on the ground but not enough for an igloo, the Eskimos make karmaks out of snow blocks. These karmaks are a little warmer than ice karmaks, because snow is a better insulator.

It takes about nine blocks of ice or snow to make the walls of a karmak. The skins that were used for the summer tent become the roof of the karmak.

October 25

Getting Ready for Winter

During the whole time when caribou are hunted, their skins can only be dried. They cannot be cured or sewn. There is a rule against making clothes before the great caribou hunt is ended and the people have moved into karmaks or igloos.

If it happens that there is an emergency, that a man needs a new garment before the sewing season, the people in the camp collect snow from drifts until there is enough to make an igloo just large enough to hold the seamstress. Only there can she sew a new garment.

In the late fall, after the caribou hunts are over, the skin clothing for the entire family is made. There are strict rules for the sewing time, but it is also a time of festivity. As soon as the last caribou leave the country, all hunting stops. The only thing that is done is a bit of fishing in a nearby river. This is the women's

busiest time, but it is a great holiday for the men if meat is plentiful. They do nothing but eat, sleep, and hold songfests. What is more, they have an excuse for this vacation, because they believe that it is dangerous to go hunting during the time the women are working on the caribou-skin clothing.

When everything is finished, every person is outfitted, the Eskimos move out onto the ice. Once they have left the sewing place, not another stitch can be sewn until the sun is high again the following spring.

The time of year this move takes place varies from year to year. If caribou hunting and trout fishing had been good and much food was stored in caches, the people spend the whole of the dark period without hunting. Some years, when the caches are small, they move to the sea ice at the end of November, but other years they may wait until January or February.

October 27

A Gift for Nuliajuk

Winter on the sea ice is a serious time, and the people know that to survive they must have the good will of the powerful spirits. Before they move to the ice, each hunter gives a special offering to Nuliajuk, the great sea spirit.

The hunter takes the skin of a lemming and fills it with many tiny figures of seals, harpoons, harpoon heads, and other things that have to



do with hunting seals. This little bundle he then sinks in the narrow crack that always forms between the shore and the winter ice.

When this gift sinks to the bottom, it pleases Nuliajuk and makes her think kindly toward the hunter. His reward is good hunting luck. Until the gift is made, the people feel that they cannot move to the sea ice and begin sealing.

November 1

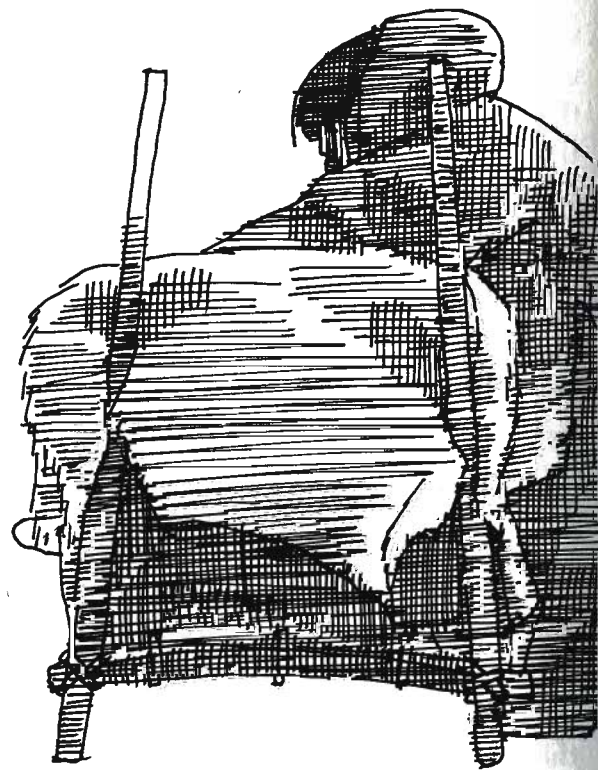
Leaving the Netsilik Eskimos

Finally the sea was frozen and we could continue on our journey, heading west, to work among other Eskimo groups.

I had learned much in a few months and had made many friends. I had come to know a new people and to understand much about them.

The mind of the Netsilik is like the surface of the many lakes that are spread over their land. It is quickly set in motion, but the waves are little ones and the water soon is calm again. Though the people are quick to react, they try not to show it. They resign themselves to difficulties and never complain. A visitor sees them as always happy. Their spirits are light and gay and their surroundings are peaceful.

I was sorry to come to the end of my stay with these people.





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