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WINTER 1952-3



REINDEER FOR THE PEOPLE ☆ ☆ Page 5

CHRISTMAS IN THE FAR NORTH ☆ Page 9

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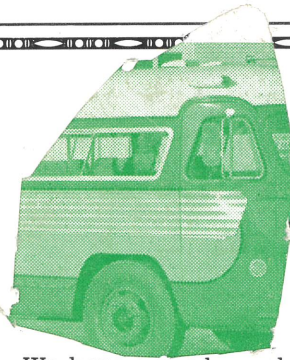
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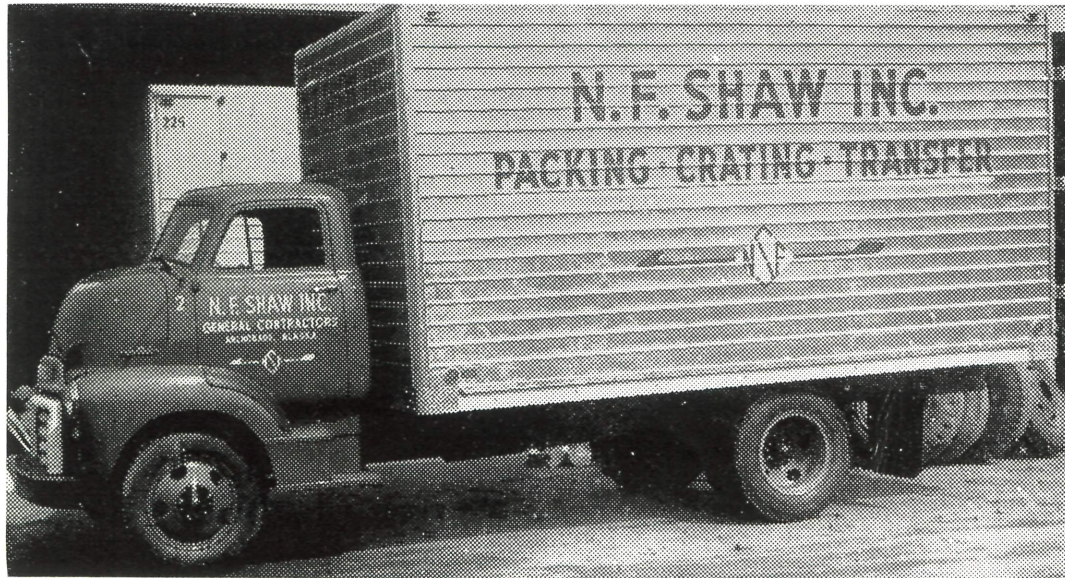
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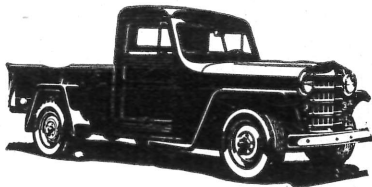
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## THE ALASKAN AGRICULTURIST

*Published Quarterly in the interests of  
Alaska's Modern Pioneers*

COVER: "Alaskan Reindeer," Painting by George Ahgupuk

VOLUME V, No. 4

WINTER, 1952-3

ED BALDWIN, Editor—1314 I Street, Anchorage.  
DICK BALDWIN, Associate Editor — Fairbanks.

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## BACK AGAIN

Art Waldron, president of Alaska Seed Inc., recently announced the sale of their Seed Department to Ed and Dick Baldwin. The Baldwins organized the Alaska Seed Company in 1942 in Sitka, Alaska, moving to Anchorage in 1944. In 1947 the business was incorporated under the name of Alaska Seed, Inc. The seed business will continue to operate at the 1314 I Street location under the name of Alaska Seed Company.

Alaska Seed Inc. has just completed an addition to its building on the corner of 13th and I Street, occupied by John Parmenter's Save More Grocery and Meat Market. The new addition will make Save More Grocery one of the largest in Anchorage. The new addition is of concrete block construction.

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# ALASKA REINDEER NOTES

By J. SIDNEY ROOD

Ladies pinched their figures to compete socially. Industry demanded fat for soaps and paint; ivory, for ornaments. So bowhead whales and walrus died.

Corsets needed stiffening with strips of the ebony-like baleen in whales' mouths. A 150 ton whale yielded \$8,000 worth at \$4.50-\$5.50 per pound. And as for oil: a tongue alone produced 12 barrels, and 70 barrels more were gained from the 10-22 inch thickness of blubber which encased the whale's 50 feet of body.

Harpoons of 278 whaling ships dotted Bering Sea with pools of blood in 1852 for a \$14,000,000 prize. In the sleepless summer hunts of later years, whales were chased through fields of ice past Barrow clear to Canada's Mackenzie River, while walrus tusks were harvested enroute, until, by 1890, the motley crews of only 49 ships would risk freezing death and profitless months in seeking surviving remnants of those species across our ravaged seas.

Whales and walrus, along with fish, seal, birds and wild reindeer, had been basic resources of our Eskimo people. They were a hunter-fisher folk who, despite a wonderful resourcefulness in extracting and employing whatever Nature offered from season-to-season, found life so precarious that their customs included killing the feeble aged and hopelessly sick members of their families.

Whale and walrus blubber had given them body heat; and it burned well in the little stone trays over which cooking was done. The dark meat, eaten frozen, dried or raw, was nutritious. Walrus hides were fine for summer tents, boot soles, covering for big skin boats (called oomiaks), thongs, and many other things. Even the transparent gut was used for their parka-type raincoats and the skylights of their winter sod houses. Decimation of whales and walrus made life even more miserable and insecure for our tuberculosis-ridden Eskimos than before American whalers began killing.

Whalers were traders, too, thus enlisting the Eskimos as resident laborers to fill their coffers when they returned to Bering Sea and the Arctic each summer. Besides flour, whiskey, kettles, tobacco and sundry other inventions, they traded firearms. Eskimos exchanged such things as baleen, ivory, furs, fresh meat, curios. Haggling developed the exchange rates, then basic rates probably got fixed by precedent.

I've never learned how many fox

pelts a gun was worth, but I knew a man who paid 25 cents per red fox pelt as late as 1900.

Power is necessary to destroy and to create, and firearms gave Eski-



J. Sidney Rood

mos more power. In past generations they had trapped and slaughtered great numbers of wild caribou with spears and arrows. Firearms increased the harvest for awhile. Caribou

shied away to unpeopled inland ranges. Perhaps better winter pastures, not encased with the damp coast's ice, rewarded them.

It is significant that a class of nearby Siberian Eskimos who owned reindeer had long found ready market for their reindeer skins and sinews among accessible Alaska Eskimos prior to 1890. Kotzebue was the liveliest international market when those Siberians arrived in oomiaks in late June. There is no evidence they traded any of the liquor they had gotten from American whalers, labelled "Florida Water," "Bay Rum," "Pain Killer" or "Jamaica Rum."

Big cream-colored patches of "rein-

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deer moss" (Cladonia) had grown in Alaska's Eskimo country, too. So it is probable that wild caribou had not even trampled it much since at least 1865. The species needs to gobble a mixture of those lichens from early fall until June to keep in condition, but the plants are killed in summer, too, when those animals trample them in search of juicy grasses, mushrooms and other "greens." And it takes them at least 25 years to regrow to ankle height on coast pastures north of Bristol Bay.

Even if white men do not secretly relish their claim to being the "root of all evil"

for weaker Eskimos and other non-White groups, a few of them like to accuse the rest of it. It is debatable whether American whalers caused Es-

## THE STEADYER'S WIFE by Law

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three years we have spent here. I remember two years ago during duck season some fellows from Seward brought a big boat out and went hunting up Moose River. Around noon they came in and carelessly left their boat at the bank without anchoring it, while they drove down to Naptowne for lunch. They hadn't been gone long when the slow current of Moose River washed their boat adrift. When I saw what had happened I put my baby in the crib and ran down the hill to the river. We had a small canvas canoe

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a Presbyterian missionary in Eskimos should feed and clothe themselves by raising domesticated reindeer from breeders which he thought the Government should import from Siberia. Thus Alaska's wasting plants could be converted into meat, warm pelts for winter clothing and bedding, sinews for sewing, leather for many uses, horns for implements, rich milk and sundry other animal products. This would be better than pauperizing Eskimos with annual doles of imported merchandise.

Sheldon Jackson envisioned reindeer, trained to harness, replacing dogs as draft animals. On basis of his belief that sled reindeer could "easily" travel 100 miles per day, he wrote of U. S. mail deliveries by reindeer-drawn sleds over most of Alaska in future.

If, as he surmized, Alaska could support 9,000,000 reindeer, a great industry would develop in which enterprising White Americans would participate.

He reasoned that some Siberians who tended reindeer were Eskimos; that our Bering Sea Natives were Eskimos, too; that an Eskimo is an Eskimo; and that, therefore, our Eskimos would tend reindeer profitably if our Government would teach them HOW.

Yet, those Siberian deer-owning families may, like modern Lapps, have inherited a reindeer herding culture dating from forebears who, 1,000 years ago, first began their nomadic following and taming of wild reindeer (caribou). The difficulty of getting Alaskan Eskimos to LIKE reindeer herding better than their habitual and exciting life of hunting and fishing out of fixed villages was much greater, I think, than Dr. Jackson realized.

His energetic and powerful propaganda favoring reindeer importations began to excite the Nation. But when, in 1891, Congressman Henry Teller, for whom Teller Village was named, tried to get \$15,000 as a first appropriation to purchase Siberian reindeer that summer, the House conference committee said no. It was argued

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that Siberian Eskimos would live reindeer, due to their superstitions; that reindeer would die ship anyhow; and that, even if they reached Alaska, dogs or Eskimo would kill them. Dr. Jackson couldn't otherwise then.

But our 1891 Government had sufficient elasticity that officer J. Orna was authorized to appeal to newspapers for private donations. Warm-hearted Americans gave strips whereupon the skipper of the whaling whery Department's steam cutter, was instructed to help Dr. J. Pound. buy and transport reindeer. break-up of the sea ice in June. Czar's Russian Government was inclined to cooperate, too, by requesting Siberian agents to assist.

Fortunately, veteran Arctic skipper, Capt. Healy, and the "Bear" were old friends of the Siberian Eskimos. For that vessel, as well as American whaling ships, had been boarded every season while at anchor in Siberia by chattering Eskimos with skins to trade for flour, powder, thread and other rich White mens' goods. Occasionally one would surprise Captain Healy with a simple English word, learned aboard some whaling craft, while awaiting or relaxing from a feast of hardtack on the "Bear's" deck.

But Eskimo deliberation seemed as interminable as the patience of a hunter waiting for a seal to show itself. The talk by sign language, broken by long periods of silence, dragged along for days. Then a trip inland after somebody's one or two deer had to be made. Sudden storms isolated the deer men from the ship. The "Bear" had cruised 1200 miles of Siberian coast before a total of 16 hog-tied reindeer had been hoisted from lifeboats into the "Bear's" hold, there to be tethered and fed oatmeal water and lichens.

The reindeer rested and braced themselves to the ship's roll like seasoned sailors. Some were aboard three weeks before they were loosed on the big green pastures of Unalaska and Amaknak Islands, where it was hoped they would survive better than on the equally herderless mainland.

Whether reindeer could live among Alaska's Eskimos and dogs still bothered skeptics, however. But Dr. Jackson had money left with which to answer those questions next year, even if Congress refused to contribute. After all, the 16 deer had cost only about \$3.50 worth of trade goods apiece.

A landing of 171 reindeer on Alaska's mainland beach 8 miles north-westwardly from Teller was achieved in the summer of 1892. Four Siberian Eskimos had been hired to herd them, as better help was not closer than Lapland. Construction of a reindeer station was begun, over which a Con-

# REINDEER

pelts a gun was worth, but I knew a man who paid 25 cents per red fox pelt as late as 1900.

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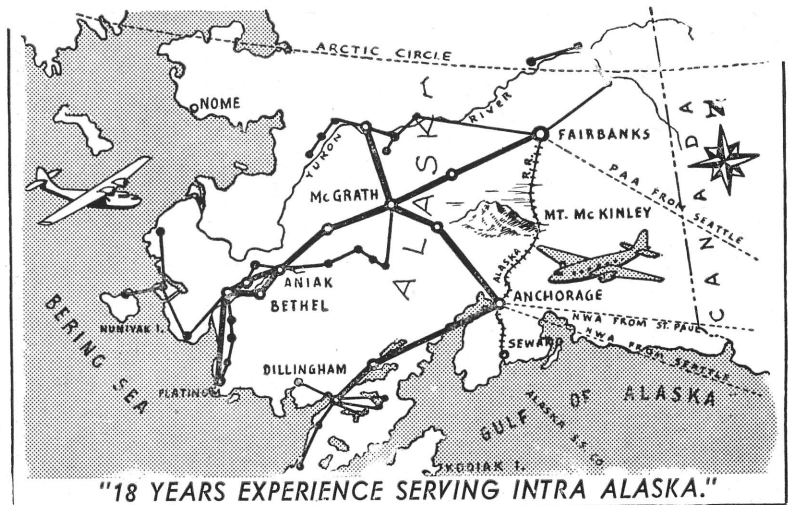
It is nearby reindeer among a to 1890. internat. berians June. T ed any

ain envy of their race, earn ock from which promised might flower and, to retain they helped tend the reindeer storms and insects on the andra. Others were afraid to or the "no" of the Govern-

as feared much then. Siberian herders clashed with missionary Lopp as homesick- all of them deeper. He found -tempered, jealous, cruel. One angered at a tired sled rein-amped it nearly to death by on its head.

(continued in the Spring issue)

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# THE HOMESTEADER'S WIFE *by* Laura Pedersen

It's a little difficult to get into the Christmas spirit this year. Guess I'm getting old. I think it would be a big help if I had the opportunity to roam through a few big department stores or dime stores at this time of year. (Whatever happened to the dime store where nothing cost over 10 cents?)

While I'm on the subject of Christmas, I think the lady that suggested buying a can of plum pudding and setting it in a pan of hot water for Christmas dinner dessert surely had the right idea. Then when everybody says, "I simply can't eat another bite!" you don't feel as bad as if you had worked hard to make a gorgeous big dessert. They'll do it every time.

\* \* \* \*

The new homesteaders in this area are busy building and getting ready for winter. Some are building log houses; others frame houses. One homesteader just put a cabin on his truck and brought it down from Anchorage. Of course these new homesteaders haven't got anything on us since we are still planning our house. Walt has the basement and cesspool dug, and I have hopes of moving into the basement next spring. We'll live in the basement until our finances permit us to build the house we have planned. At least I'll have room for more than two people at one time.

If a person could only find a way to homestead and make a living at the same time you'd really have it made! It's what we're striving for if our strength and stamina hold out.

\* \* \* \*

We had a very late freeze-up this fall. Quite different from the other

three years we have spent here. I remember two years ago during duck season some fellows from Seward brought a big boat out and went hunting up Moose River. Around noon they came in and carelessly left their boat at the bank without anchoring it, while they drove down to Naptowne for lunch. They hadn't been gone long when the slow current of Moose River washed their boat adrift. When I saw what had happened I put my baby in the crib and ran down the hill to the river. We had a small canvas canoe that one of our friends had used earlier in the day. I shoved it in the water and rowed out through the path he had broken through the ice that morning. I reached the open water just in time to meet the other boat as it came drifting down. I rowed alongside of it and tried to grab it, without success. Looking for the anchor in it I discovered there was none.

By this time I had drifted close to the Kenai River, which is a very swift and large river. I couldn't row against the Kenai current so I let go of the big boat and headed for shore. It was then I noticed that my feet were in water. I looked around and discovered that our friend had torn a big hole in the bow when breaking ice that morning. The water was rushing in faster and faster. I headed for the nearest shore and started breaking the shore ice with an oar. By the time I made it to shore the boat was half full of ice-water and I was soaked to the knees.

Later, the men came back and I told them where their boat had gone and

they went after it in another boat. I guess they found it alright.

\* \* \* \*

I've discovered a way to keep your morale up. Pick a successful person considerably older than yourself and then say, "When I'm as old as he is, I'll have it made too." I imagine this will work until the time when it becomes difficult to find someone older than yourself.

\* \* \* \*

Candy is something that is a must during Yuletide holidays, especially the home-made kind. Here's a recipe I obtained from one of my new neighbors, Mrs. Nema Rountree.

## Chocolate Covered Cherries

- 1 jar small size, Maraschino cherries
- 1/4 lb. margarine
- 1/2 small can evaporated milk
- 2 lbs. powdered sugar

Mix the milk and sugar alternately with the margarine, roll in balls the size desired. (About the size of a walnut.) Poke hole in ball and push a cherry in, then roll back into shape. Grease your hands with margarine to prevent the candy from sticking. After inserting the cherries, set the candy in a cool place until firm and easy to handle.

Melt five squares unsweetened chocolate and 1/2 square parafine wax in a double boiler. Let cool until you can dip the candy balls in on a toothpick and the chocolate will stick to the candy.

If you have as good luck with them as Nema has, you will have some really good candy.

## Why take a Chance?

Depend on Alaska Seed Company for your garden seed and supplies in 1953. New stocks will arrive approximately February. Only those seeds and supplies proven right for Alaska are carried. Why take a chance on hit or miss ordering? Order from these pages next issue. A complete seed list will be shown.

# ALASKA SEED COMPANY

1314 I Street

Anchorage, Alaska

# Our Front Cover

Our front cover was drawn by George Ahgupuk, Alaska's own Eskimo Artist. Forty-two year old George and his wife Kara were both born on the Bering Sea in the little Eskimo village of Shishmaref. The Ahgupuks have four children ranging from

seven to fourteen years. Stella in the photo is seven years old. All of the children were born at Shishmaref, the Ahgupuks having come to Anchorage about eighteen months ago. George spent a long time in the hospital a few years ago and there discovered he had a talent for drawing. While lying bed with nothing to do one day he tried tracing a picture of a walrus on a piece of tissue paper with his thumbnail. It looked so good he called a nurse who promptly gave him pencil and paper, and in the long



George Ahgupuk and daughter, Stella

months that followed George taught himself to draw. His drawings are 100% authentic, having spent his entire life hunting, fishing and of course living the life of an Eskimo on the bleak coast of the Bering Sea. We have a hunch that George Ahgupuk will go a long way with his talented drawing. If you would like a drawing like the one on the cover of this magazine, drawn especially for you, you name the Arctic subject. It will be drawn on reindeer skin, tanned by George himself. Write to George Ahgupuk, care of the Alaskan Agriculturist, 1314 I Street, Anchorage, and we will see to it that he gets the letter.

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# CHRISTMAS IN THE FAR NORTH

By MRS. NANCY PARKER

Christmas in Alaska begins when the mail order catalogues arrive. In most parts of the Territory, the middle of October brings both the first snows and the square, heavy mail sacks with their colorful contents. While the frost gathers on the windows and the winter sun makes a shallow arc on the southern horizon, the boys and girls of Alaska pour over the pages of beautiful toys, making their hopeful lists for Santa Claus. For old women in oil lighted, driftwood huts, for children at remote mission outposts, for working girls in modern city apartments, the mail order catalogue is the wish book full of "someday" daydreams.

In the villages where there are few or no stores, most of the Christmas shopping must be done from the catalogues. Ordering begins early. Gifts for friends in the states, if they are to arrive by Christmas, must leave Alaska by the middle of November. An equal amount of time must be allowed for the gift to come from the States, to be inspected and wrapped. Last minute shopping in Alaska frequently means a rush order sent to the mail order house via airmail the middle of October.

In the cities there are further complications. Since the local merchants must compete with the mail order houses, they must display their wares so that the gift shoppers will know what they can buy in their own town. Christmas ornaments frequently make their appearance on the shelves about the time the football season in the States is getting well under way. All through Halloween and Thanksgiving, store counters glitter with tinsel and

artificial snow. By the time Christmas arrives, it is likely to be slightly anti-climactic.

But Christmas Spirit has a way of spreading in spite of commercial handicaps. Around the first of December, children's behavior suddenly takes a turn for the better, housewives hunt up their favorite cookie recipes, and wreathes and trees begin to appear in homes and offices.

Because of the great size of Alaska and the extremes of climate represented, Christmas trees are as individual as the communities they decorate. In the far north where there are no trees and where the highest bushes are the scrubby waist high willows along the river banks, the decorated Christmas trees are a new part of the festivities. The early missionaries and teachers, a little homesick for familiar customs and eager to share their traditions with their native friends, were amazingly ingenious in concocting artificial trees. Broomsticks with green wrapped twigs glued to the handle, willow branches tied together, and wire covered with green paper have all been used. Decorated with paper garlands and strings of cranberries, they were beautiful to the unsophisticated eyes of the parka clad tundra children.

Recently real fir trees have been

flown to treeless Nome and from these distributed to the villages.

In the heavily forested central and southern Alaska, trees are to be had for the cutting. Around the large towns, special areas are designated for the use of those who want to cut their own trees without trespassing on the property of the homesteaders.

One of the happy memories many Alaskan children will have is the trip to the woods to select the tree. In air so crisp and cold that the trees snap and crackle, they lace on their boots and snowshoes. Along the paths the snow has been beaten into a thick crust by the furry feet of the forest animals. Snowshoe rabbits, as white as their background, flip across the paths and fade into invisibility when they stop beside a snow covered log to sniff the air. Ptarmigan in their winter feathers take flight with a noisy beating of wings. Rumpled snow and tracks among the willow thickets betray the presence of moose. The spruce trees are black against the daz-

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zling whiteness, every branch clearly outlined.

When the perfect tree has been selected, the woods ring with the whang of the ax and the excited cries of the children. The blows loosen avalanches of snow that cascade off the branches, sliding down the necks and filling the boot tops of the unwary.

For those who prefer to get their trees in a less strenuous manner, firs are flown in from the States and are sold in the stores.

Community activities in the cities of Alaska are much the same as in the States. Sunday Schools put on plays depicting the beloved story of the First Christmas. Carolers sing on the street corners, Santa sets up a branch North Pole in the store windows, and bells chime from the church steeples.

Anchorage, one year, put on an unscheduled Christmas pageant. Like many Alaskan towns about that time, Anchorage was short of power. Lights were liable to go out without warning. Merchants kept candles on hand for emergencies, so that business could be carried on as usual. It had been a murky day. Just about dusk it began to snow. Great soft flakes drifted gently from the sky, piling in mounds along the streets and on the window ledges. Suddenly the lights blinked out. As if a signal, candles appeared in all the windows along the main street. From a nearby church came the strains of a choir practicing Christmas carols. It was as if we had stepped into a Victorian Christmas card.

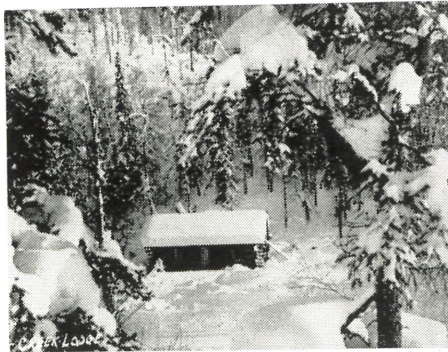
Most communities have traditional programs. For several years the Anchorage Little Theatre presented "A Christmas Carol." This was an adaptation of Dickens' famous story. The arrangement, made by Frank Brink, who is now with the armed forces, was planned to include as many of the talented young people as possible in the cast. Both the actors and the audience had a wonderful time.

In the villages where there is a Russian Orthodox Church the singing of carols has become a colorful ceremony. After the Christmas Eve mass, the carolers form a procession, led by a standard bearer carrying a large shining star. Like the wise men of old went seeking the Child, they pass through the village singing their carols and knocking on doors. Wherever they stop, they are invited to share the traditional Christmas Eve meal.

In many of the native villages Christmas night is the occasion for retelling in dance and song the age old stories of famous hunts and brave deeds.

The shortage of women in Alaska brought about the Hope village community dinner. Founded about the turn of the century as a mining cen-

## Winter Scene



This photo of Spring Creek Lodge on the Palmer Highway was taken several years ago just before this popular eating place was opened for business. Looks cold doesn't it?

ter, the men outnumbered the women about twenty to one. Taking pity on their lonely bachelor estate one Christmas, the women offered to get the dinner if the men would provide the meat. The resulting celebration was so successful that it has become a tradition for everyone in the vicinity to gather at the Community hall on Christmas Day — turkeys by courtesy of the bachelors.

Christmas dinners in Alaska vary all the way from the traditional turkey and fruitcake to rump roast of moose with wild cranberry sauce. Many homes make it an occasion for serving as many different Alaskan grown foods as possible. One housewife listed in her menu Caribou roast, moose mincemeat, wild cranberry jelly and wild blueberry pie. The vegetables she served had been raised in her garden the past summer and either frozen or stored in her root cellar. She had a choice of peas, spin-

ach, beets, turnips, carrots, potatoes and celery. She could also have served frozen salmon steak and minced clam cocktails, had she wished. A few Alaskan Christmas dinners will feature bear meat, sheep or bison steaks.

There are few hours of daylight on Christmas, since the sun has just made its shortest trip of the year, but for those few hours the country side is full of children trying out new sleds and skis. Dog teams, gay with bells, flash across the snow. Occasionally a sleigh, drawn by one of the few horses in Alaska, jingles down the road. Dusk comes early and as the lights of the Christmas trees shine from the windows of the homes of the cities of Alaska and the candles and lanterns shine throughout the villages, the echo of Saint Nicholas' parting wish, "Merry Christmas to all and to all a Good Night," drifts softly across the Alaskan snow.

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# Gruening Speaks on Agriculture

By Governor Ernest Gruening

Fall is upon us with its gold and crimson foliage. This year's growing season is coming to an end. So it seems appropriate to discuss the most basic and universal of all economic occupations — agriculture.

Agriculture is also one of the oldest of man's pursuits. Its beginnings are shrouded in prehistoric times. Its coming brought the greatest transition in the story of the human race — certainly the greatest until the advent of the machine age. It transformed man's way of life from the chase for game in primeval forests into the seeding of ground to produce a crop. Through long eons the primitive hunter was transformed into a planter. In time he learned to domesticate to his

use some of the wild animals his forbears had hunted. He ceased to be a nomad and became a settler. As such, he required more permanent shelter. He acquired neighbors. These neighbors perforce began to cooperate and to exchange their skills. Communities were born. Thus the transition from hunter to planter gradually wrought through the ages the dawn of what later was to be called civilization. And the Great Society of today still rests, despite all its complexities and refinements, on the continuing attainment of man's three basic needs — food, clothing and shelter. The first of these is food. But the soil which produces it also contributes mightily to the procurement of all three.

In Alaska the prehistoric epic had to be relived. The Alaska aborigine was a fisherman and a hunter. With the coming of civilization, agriculture was likewise inevitable. But it never showed much promise in Alaska until recently.

To be sure the Russians planted small gardens. Our gold miners, at the turn of the century, did likewise. The gold rush likewise attracted the attention of the United States Department of Agriculture to Alaska and the first agricultural experiment station was established at Sitka in 1898. Other stations followed at Kodiak, Kenai,

Copper Center, Rampart, Fairbanks and Matanuska. But the appropriations for them were negligible and all the stations were gradually eliminated by 1932 except the ones at Fairbanks and Matanuska, which were kept going on a very slender basis.

The fact is that very little confidence in the potentialities of Alaska agriculture had been established through the years. But actually they had never been given a fair test. For one thing Alaskans were more interested in the glamorous hunt for gold and in the prospect of quick profit from our fisheries silver hords. And in Washington many people in authority still thought of Alaska as a land of snow and ice. The myth of "Seward's folly" still persisted.

Although the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines had been established near Fairbanks in 1922 as a land-grant college, almost wholly through the vision and enterprise of Dr. Charles Ernest Bunnell, Congress thereafter failed consistently to recognize its legal obligations to this institution. Appropriations for agricultural research and extension work for land-grant colleges authorized by various Acts of Congress were not made for the one institution of higher learning in the Territory which in 1935 was to become the University of Alaska. Our voteless delegates pleaded year after year for what was only Alaska's rightful due. Their pleas fell on deaf congressional ears. It was merely another of the numerous varieties of discrimination which Alaska as a territory suffered.

Certain unforeseen events have greatly changed this situation.

There was first of all the Matanuska Colonization Project, one of the imaginative and constructive experiments which characterized the Roosevelt Administration.

"Let's take some hundreds of people from the blighted farm areas in the states, the dust bowl areas, and give them a chance to start life anew in Alaska," said President Roosevelt, "and let's see what can be done up there for agriculture."

The project's execution, initiated too rapidly for adequate preparation, was faulty in some respects. But it publicized Alaska as a potential area for settlement after a long period of un-interest on the part of Americans in the states and of dwindling population in Alaska. It likewise called attention to Alaska's agricultural potentialities. It established initially 200 farm homes, with barns and subsequently with cleared acreage, and

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brought into being a network of roads in the Valley essential to the marketing of farm products. In short it created for the first time a farming area in Alaska in a climatically favorable region.

The next steps in Alaska's agricultural advance were incidental to the all-round growth of Alaska and to conditions arising out of international events. The national administrations' new interest in Alaska, already demonstrated in the Matanuska Valley, was directed at establishing a permanent and increasing citizenry in the Territory, in place of the more or less transient population that had inevitably resulted in Alaska through the long years of neglect.

Another factor which some of us in Alaska missed no opportunity to point out to federal authorities was the great agricultural activities in corresponding latitudes in Soviet Siberia. When Vice-President Wallace returned from his trip to Russia by way of Siberia in 1944 he reported at Fairbanks that the Soviets had established agricultural experiment stations every hundred miles of latitude and longitude, that they were in consequence developing new strains of grain and other crops and pushing the limits of agriculture further and further north. These Soviet agricultural developments were being integrated with industrial and military development. Washington's interest in Alaskan agriculture, long dormant, belatedly began to be aroused.

Meanwhile the Territory took an important step forward in establishing, by the act of the 1945 Legislature, its own Department of Agriculture. Dr. George W. Gasser, who had devoted the major part of his adult life to agriculture in the Tanana Valley and had just retired as Dean of Agriculture at the University of Alaska, was appointed Commissioner.

The next year, in 1946, a special task force of agricultural experts was authorized by Congress to find out what could be done to promote agriculture in Alaska.

They came, saw and reported the obvious — that research, sustained research, and the establishment and continued maintenance of the appropriate experiment stations, adequately staffed and equipped, were prerequisite.

Clearly, agriculture in Alaska, with its relatively shorter seasons, its unstudied climatic variations, its unknown soils, its unapprehended parasites, needed its own book of knowledge. Farmers in the states had for years had the benefit of nearby federal and state experiment and testing stations. But the knowledge acquired for their areas was seldom applicable to Alaska.

Congress acted. That, coupled with

the Territory's own efforts, was the beginning of a new day for agriculture in Alaska. Agricultural research on a reasonably adequate scale has been adopted. Don L. Irwin, for many years in charge of the Matanuska Experiment Station, was put in charge of the whole research program. Cooperation between University, federal and territorial agencies is in effect.

What then is being attempted for Alaskan agriculture? What are the objectives? The research may be summed up as seeking answers to the following questions:

"What steps need to be taken to develop agricultural species that will be prolific, hardy, resistant to local climatic conditions, best suited to our various soils?"; "What needs to be done to find the right strains, to improve existing strains, to increase soil productivity, to reduce parasite and disease destruction, and to put the resultant product in touch with the best market?"

Now these results cannot be accomplished overnight. Starting virtually from scratch, it is a long process. New strains developed by cross-breeding have to be tested through the seasons. The seasons cannot be hurried. The findings of one year must be cumulated on those of the preceding year. Insecticides, fertilizers, methods of cultivation, all have to go through this same process for each different species and in each different soil area.

However, the work has been organized and systematized. It is divided in-

to eight research departments each headed by a scientist highly trained in his field. These fields are agricultural economics, agricultural engineering, agronomy, animal husbandry, entomology, horticulture, plant pathology and soils science.

Some achievements may already be recorded after four short years. A new and better variety of potato which exceeds previously grown commercial varieties in yield has been released to the Alaska certified seed growers association. Two superior varieties of cereals — golden Rain Oats and Edda barley — have been introduced after extensive trials. In the most important field of dairying forage crops have been improved after careful testing of many varieties. Artificial insemination has been introduced and successfully conducted. Experiments in raising calves for herd replacements have made possible the increasing of herds locally instead of the more costly procedure of importing mature cows

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from the states. Cross-breeding has been introduced. Red Dane cattle have been introduced into the Matanuska Valley and have been cross-bred successfully with holsteins and guernseys. In consequence of these and other measures the annual milk production has been increased in four years by eleven hundred pounds per cow. When the experimental work was started it was 7200 pounds. Last year it averaged 8300 pounds. Some farmers have done very much better. One in the Valley raised his average production from 8610 pounds per cow in 1949 to 10,156 pounds in 1951.

Overall agricultural production is

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steadily increasing. Milk and egg production have doubled. Last year the value of Alaska's products was as follows:

Dairy products \$996,768 — just under a million dollars.

Vegetable products \$528,624. This has risen to the all-time high of over half a million dollars.

Poultry products \$358,953.

Livestock products — including both beef and pork — \$176,886.

The total value of these products in the year 1951 was \$2,061,233.

Divided into regions, the Matanuska Valley produced \$1,274,803. The Tanana Valley \$495,630. Agriculture on the Kenai Peninsula is just beginning. It was virtually impossible to sell its products until a road connection with potential markets existed. Now that the Sterling Highway has been completed the farmers of Homer, Ninilchik, Kasilof and Kenai will have a direct truck route to Anchorage and Seward. Therefore the small value of agricultural products of last year, \$66,000, is due for a substantial increase. Greatly increased homesteading in the Kenai Peninsula makes this outlook promising.

Finally Southeastern Alaska produced \$349,200 worth of products. \$161,000 were dairy products, \$25,000 poultry products and \$125,000 pelts from fur farming. Let us not forget that we have a valuable fur farming experiment station in Petersburg conducted by Jim Leakley.

The Alaska Department of Agriculture, with headquarters at Fairbanks, is developing markets for all farm

products grown in the Territory. Commissioner Clyde G. Sherman, who succeeded Dr. Gasser two years ago, is working closely with the farmers, and endeavors to assist them in solving their problems. Close liaison is maintained with the military whose consumption of Alaska-grown produce constitutes a major market.

Commissioner Sherman is vigorously conducting a livestock health program assisted by two veterinarians, Dr. Earl Graves, stationed in the Matanuska Valley, and Dr. Fred Honsinger, stationed in Southeastern Alaska. Immunization of cattle against Bang's disease is being carried on. Meat inspection and slaughter house regulations have been enacted. Alaska has the potentialities for a beef as well as a dairy industry.

Agriculture in Alaska has progressed encouragingly in recent years. Although relatively in its infancy, it gives the prospect of becoming increasingly important as an industry, and one whose future value should not be minimized.

Agriculture in Alaska still faces many problems. First, we must assure the continuing of the research and other programs now under way. In 1953 the Federal government appropriated \$372,000 and the Territory \$113,550 for their work. These funds should at the very least be maintained at those levels.

Land clearing costs must be reduced. Approximately a thousand acres of land are being cleared annually for farming but an average cost of at least \$200 an acre poses a financial problem for the farmer.

Farm financing is a problem. The Farm Home Administration, whose Alaska representative is I. M. C. Anderson in Anchorage, may make two types of loans to farmers who cannot be financed by private banking institutions. They are farm ownership loans with a top limit of \$12,000 repayable with 4% interest over 40 years and lesser cattle loans repayable over seven years at 5% interest. Only eight farm ownership loans, but 148 cattle loans, have been made. Legislation is needed that will enable the homesteader to place a lien against his improvements and his claim for a homestead. At present the homesteader must have title before his land can be used as security for borrowing for the many costs needed to get into production.

More farm to market roads are needed.

Given a continuation and better yet, an intensification, of present efforts, and adoption of remedial measures, farming in Alaska will continue to grow, will support more and more families and add an indispensable factor to the diversification which Alaska's economy needs.

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## NEW METHOD OF LAND CLEARING

By Dick Hendrickson

Freshman, Palmer High School

I used to think clearing land belonged to the bulldozer. This is inefficient in some ways because a dozer would scrape most of the topsoil away. The topsoil is very much needed for successful farming.

The other day at Clair Patton's farm in the Matanuska Valley, I learned different. I saw the new and modernized way of clearing land. This was made possible only because of the Ford Tractor and equipment.

It is the new land-clearing winch which leaves the earth ready for plowing. This method of clearing removes trees, stumps and roots much more thoroughly than the old way. The winch is tractor mounted. Its size and weight are below any comparable piece of equipment yet designed to do the job.

Stumps regardless of size, can be removed from the land. When these stumps were removed from the ground, there were no roots left in the subsoil.

The front end of the tractor was hitched to the base of a tree by a 5/8 inch cable.

Working like this the tractor and winch could remove stumps from one acre of ground before it was necessary to move the tractor to the second location.

One ideal condition for using the winch is to have the tree cut off about three feet from the ground.

One-half stick of dynamite is recommended for use under each stump to break away the subsoil from the roots, so that when the stump is pulled, the roots will come free of the subsoil and will not leave a hole to be filled later.

Power was transmitted to the winch from the tractor by a dual transmission.

The cable-drum can be set for any speed from one foot to 250 feet a minute. With the slower speed the stumps come out of the ground without any root breakage. The cable was wound around the machine cable drum. The free end of the cable line is equipped with a hook for cinching the line around the tree.

The most valuable feature of the entire operation was the top soil was not disturbed, so that the fertile layer of the soil remained on the surface of the soil, ready for cultivation.

### Rotavator Tractor Attachment

The rotavator is indispensable for the preparation of land for the new harvest. Its rugged construction enables it to break up and prepare virgin or abandoned land overgrown with weeds, thus turning waste land

# Tanana Fair



By DICK BALDWIN

The Tanana Valley Fair at Fairbanks, after a year of inactivity, was revived early in April of this year. New officers elected at the first meeting of the Board of Directors were — President, Daniel D. Bemis; Vice-President, Paul Grimen; Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. James J. Goodfellow. The new Board of Directors were—Dan Bemis, Paul Grimen, Mrs. M. G. Bradway, Irving W. Abbott, Ralph Persinger, John O. Gustafson and George Schanafelt.

At their first meeting the directors decided that the fair need a "Home of its own." In previous years, the school house was used to house exhibits and it had not proved too successful. There was not sufficient room on the ground for livestock displays and consessions. Several new sites were studied and it was decided that a 40 acre block of section 33, five miles from town on the college road was the ideal spot.

This land was owned by the University of Alaska, so an arrangement had to be worked out with the college. The directors, with the help of Civil Engineer, Mrs Frank White, examined the area closely on foot, no easy job in a foot and half of snow, and prepared a diagram of the proposed grounds. It was, and is, the hope of the Fair Board to establish a recrea-

into areas of cultivated and fertile land for the production of crops.

The rotavator I saw at Clair Patton's farm was attached to a small Ford Tractor. It had two speeds which covered all types of work. The rotavator was provided with its own hydraulic lift and depth control winch.

### McCulloch Chain Saw

The first step taken after the tractor and winch had pulled the trees down and pulled out the stumps was

tional area without equal in Alaska. According to the plans, the entire 40 acres were to be developed as a public recreation area to be used by any groups or individuals who wish to use it. The plans of the Fair Association were submitted to the Board of Regents for approval. The Board accepted the proposal and the Tanana Valley Fair Association was given a 10 year lease on the land.

Work of clearing land was started as soon as weather conditions permitted, and on July 26 foundations and floor of the main building were poured. The building was completed and occupied August 21, the first day of the Fair. George Schanafelt, a well known local contractor, donated his time to the construction of the building which measures 50 by 100 feet with a 14 foot ceiling. It is constructed of concrete blocks and frame, has a full stage and a concrete floor suitable for dancing. Space is available around the outside of the building for many of the displays and for this year, other displays were housed in tents surrounding the building. These tents, borrowed from the Army, will be replaced by permanent structures as soon as possible.

Now being developed or planned for the near future are such recreational facilities as picnic areas, a ball diamond, bowling green and many others.

to cut them up so the Ford Tractor Disposal Unit could dump them on the stump row. Cutting them up was done by a McCulloch chain-driven saw. It did this task very well.

### Ford Tractor Disposal Unit

After the logs were cut up a Ford Tractor with a hydraulic lift picked up the logs and stumps and put them on the stump row. The stumps free from dirt would be burned completely afterward.

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# Clearing Land



This picture was taken this fall during a land clearing demonstration put on in the Matanuska Valley by Al Brooks of Brooks Feed & Supply, and Orrin Wright on the tractor, sales manager for Shafer Tractor and Implement Co. The Alaskan Agriculturist offered a prize for the best story written by the High School boys from the Palmer school on the land clearing demonstration. We will let the winner tell the story.

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# SUCCESS IS HOW YOU FIND IT

Irvin Ivenson and his wife, Mildred, are among the many successful farmers who are not only making a living farming in Alaska, but building a solid future for themselves and their children. There are two husky boys in the Ivenson family, Dick, six, and Bob, three years.

Irvin came to Alaska way back in 1938. Most people say they came to Alaska because they always wanted to and finally got the chance. But not Irve. He said he came because he heard a man could earn 60c an hour working here. Sixty cents was plenty of money back in those good old days, especially in his native Wisconsin. It sounded like such a good thing, that he was able to borrow the money to make the trip. Friends and relatives tried to discourage Irve because they discounted the story of high wages, and they knew that the weather was so rough in Alaska that work could be carried out only two or three months during the summer.

He came, however, and found he could actually earn 60c per hour and that the climate in Alaska is much milder than in the famous farming state of Wisconsin. Irve worked two years in the Matanuska Valley, helping clear land and in the harvest, also working for the Road Commission. By the end of that time he knew he wanted to make his lifetime home in Alaska, and to establish himself as a farmer.

Although he had not been raised on a farm, his farming experience consisting of the two years working in the Matanuska Valley. He decided that farming was the life, and Alaska was the place. Before starting the long time job of clearing a paying farm out of the brushland, Irve decided to make a trip back to visit his folks. While there he met Mildred, his wife to be. Irve soon returned to Alaska, but first convinced Mildred she should come to Alaska to attend their wedding, which she did the following year.

The Ivensons purchased 40 acres of land, seven miles south of Anchorage in 1940 to begin their life as Alaskan farmers. In 1941 they homesteaded an additional 80 acres adjoining. To start with, of course, there wasn't a foot of cultivated land on the place. So they started a poultry business to make it possible to live off the land, while clearing the heavy growth of birch and getting enough acres under the plow to make a go of dirt farming.

By 1945 they had 20 acres cleared and started raising potatoes exclusively. They have increased their cultivated land to 40 acres now, but still grow only 20 acres of potatoes, using a three year rotation of crops. Three years in



Irvin Ivenson, left, and Clyde Sherman, commissioner of agriculture.

clover and three years in potatoes. The clover isn't cut or pastured but just left on the ground. Five hundred pounds of commercial fertilizer 5-20-10 is added to each acre when the clover is planted, and produces crops up to a man's shoulder.

Irve said when they were forced to use all the ground in cultivated crops every year, the ground was hard to work, muddy and sticky when wet and dried out quickly after rains and the spring thaw. Now the texture of the soil is getting better every year, and our annual drought through July and part of August has no effect whatsoever on the crop. Here in Alaska the disintegration of cover crop plowed under is slow, due to the long winter when all decomposition is stopped by the freeze-up.

The soil now on the Ivenson fields is the kind a good farmer likes to pick

up and run through his fingers. Irve fertilizes his potatoes what is considered heavily, using 1800 pounds of 5-20-10 to each acre. This fertilizer is all put on the ground with the planter and the time of planting, and his crop never falls under ten tons of potatoes per acre, come drought or short season.

A few years back when they were cropping every year, and using the recommended five or six sacks per acre, they considered a crop of five or six tons good. The cull-out was much greater then than now. Irve used to figure that 25% cull-out was a necessary evil, due to small potatoes ill shaped or through mechanical injury. Now, he says, less than 4% of the field run crop failed to make U. S. No. 1.

Alaskan potatoes never ripen in the ground. The tops are always killed by the first frost instead of dying by the ripening process, and are very tender and bruise easily by rough handling. The farmers are just learning to handle the new crop like peaches. On

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the Ivenson farm the potatoes are literally handled with kid gloves. The digging equipment touched by potatoes is rubberized. Even the pick-up baskets are protected with rubber. And the pickers themselves are asked to lay each potato in the basket, not to drop it in.

They built a special low truck for hauling the half sacks to the storage building, low so the potatoes can be handled with a minimum amount of damage. The bed of the truck is covered with one inch of celotex as added protection. Practically no damage can be found in the big storage bin when handled this way. A savings of more than 20% over the old ways means a lot to the farmer producing over 200 tons of potatoes, that are worth 6c per pound in the bins. Ivenson says, the funny thing about it is that it doesn't cost him as much per hundred to harvest, as it did in the old rough and tumble days. Of course both the crop and machinery are better now.

In digging, even three years ago, one man rode the tractor and one the digger. Irve finds it much better to operate the digger depth control from the tractor, using hydraulic controls. The cost of adding this equipment to tractor and digger is less than \$150.

The Ivenson farm boasts the most

modern farming equipment including a top-beater. This machine pulverizes the tops, making digging much easier and making it possible to dig before frost, if that seems advisable. Irve hills his potatoes extra high, eight to nine inches. The beater can than take an inch or so off the top of the hills, without injuring the tubers. The beater can, in this way, make a clean sweep of all the tops. The potatoes are all on top of the ground and are easy to pick up.

Due to the newness of the potatoes when dug, mechanical sackers are not satisfactory. All payments in the potato harvest are made by piece work. A good picker makes as much as \$5.00 per hour, quite a bit more than the 60c an hour that brought Irvin to Alaska in the first place.

The Ivensons built last year one of the finest potato storages in the North, being 40x90 feet. The storage is built on a hillside. Trucks drive right into the bin. The back-end of the building is truck high, so that loading out is easy. The storage is an above ground building, using one foot of shavings as insulation all around, and holds the temperature easily with just a little heat added during the coldest weather.

The only piece of equipment not up to date is the grader. This they built themselves some years ago. Irve says he doesn't like to destroy the grader as long as it is doing a good job.

Mrs. Ivenson tends the sorting table and says it isn't much of a job anymore, so few of the potatoes have to be hand sorted. She works in the harvest and cutting of seed and shows her farm rearing by the expert way she handles these jobs.

Irve thinks it is very important that the seed be thoroughly dried after being cut and treated. They cut the potatoes, treat with Semasanbel and spread out on the root-house floor, not over four inches deep. All doors are left open where a breeze can play over the potatoes for three or four days, until they are thoroughly dry before planting. A small potato is used for seed. The seed is brought out of cool storage about two weeks before planting, so that they can get a quick start. The seed is planted very shallow in Alaska, the seed piece being left practically on top of the ground and hilled up. This puts the seed in the top inch or so of soil and gets a much quicker start than if it was planted deep.

The Ivensons have always been very careful about selling a good grade of potatoes on the local market and have done a great deal to force the grade of Alaskan potatoes up, so that today most of the potatoes used are Alaskan grown.

A few years back the farmers thought they should be able to market everything they raised as is. The merchant didn't know he could get a good grade of local products, and so purchased most of his produce from the States, rather than clutter up his bins with cull and damaged local produce. That's mainly over now. The finest produce seen in Alaskan markets is Alaskan grown and graded. A few farmers and luckily they are getting fewer each year, think they can sell low grade produce. The Ivensons like Alaska, because they say Alaska has been good to them. Alaska likes the Ivensons and other folks of their type, because what they are doing is certainly good for Alaska.

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# RANCHING IN THE HOUSE

By THE ELLIOTTS

Have you ever seen a Chinchilla? Perhaps, if you are a new resident in Alaska because in the States they are a growing new industry. However, people who have been in the territory some time, may be much like ourselves. We never saw a Chinchilla or even a picture of one before we bought our first pair. We lived on Annette Island, the air base near Ketchikan, and actually we knew very little of what people were doing in this new industry.

A friend of ours heard from his dad about Chinchilla raising becoming a profitable hobby, so Joe and Kitty, Sam and I decided to buy a pair with Joe's dad elected to care for them. We went on for some time with our only link with the animals in letter writing. Joe took a trip Outside, bringing back pictures and thereby we became better acquainted with our little brood. Time went marching on, thence our move to Anchorage, with prospects of a home of our own. We then began to think of getting to know the animals first hand.

A little investigating, or perhaps, I had better say a lot of asking, finally uncovered a few people in Alaska owning Chinchillas. We sought these out to check on just what we'd need to prepare for the addition to our family. We shipped our small new tenants up then, ranching them out while we built an extra room on our home to accommodate our little fluff balls that are literally worth their weight in gold.

The first of May of this year "Elliott's Chinchilla Ranch" became a

reality. I'll never forget the trip I made after my herd without any spare tire for the car. One of my mamas was expecting her family any day and I was actually a nervous wreck when the four worn tires taxied me safely up to the door of our new unit where all were to live happily a few years, at any rate, until pelting time arrives. There is no hobby, business, or even

to the Chinchilla ranch. To begin with I hesitated to handle my little powder puffs on the hoof, but each one has his own individual personality and all are such friendly gentle bits of humanity that things went very smoothly. Let me say here, quite truthfully, if something caused me to give up my contact and care of these new found friends, I'd be completely lost. You can be sure that when pelting time arrives in five or ten years I won't be in on that end of it.

After checking my "children" each morning, I wander back through the kitchen, opening the door for the dog, then go into the unit to see that all is well — checking the drinking water and any cages with expectant mothers. Most babies are born in the Chinchilla world between midnight and nine a.m. They are a nocturnal animal, waking up in the evening, playing all night with their wheels or swings or ping pong balls, or whatever it provided for their necessary exercise. In the daytime, visitors come in and I am sure many think what inactive dopy creatures these fabulous Chinchillas are. Just come to see us any evening about feeding time or sand bath time. There is no chance for any such opinion then. Every cage is alive and all are trying to get our attention. Some



Photo by Ward W. Wells

Sam and Billie Elliott with their two daughters, Lucille May and Sandra Lee.

pleasure where some elbow grease is not involved, so we were prepared to put out some time and energy.

I, being home all the time, fell heir

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will rattle feed dishes, and others pull and chew on cage doors. The first ones to be given their sand baths are envied characters.

I better make all of this clear to people who know nothing of Chinchillas. In their native habitat in the Andes Mountains there is a quantity of powdered stone or volcanic ash. This makes a perfect bed of sand for them to bathe in. Here we furnish them with a hand basin, one-half or one-third full of sand, and they roll to their heart's content, removing grease and grime from their dense fur.

After their bath we change the papers underneath the cages. The next step is feeding a handful of hay and a tablespoon of specially prepared pellets for Chinchilla consumption to each. Last, we refill the water bottles and the animals are ready for a good breakfast and a night's frolicking. For our approximately fifty animals this takes about an hour ordinarily, but often we spend much longer playing with and giving special attention to one and all.

Our equipment is simple and inexpensive, consisting of essentials. Home made all-wire cages, nest box, dropping pans, coke drinking bottle, feed dishes and exercise wheel. Our unit, built for the animals and paid for by them, is a light airy, cedar paneled room. Incidentally, any of our neighbors will tell you about the fun we had chopping through the frozen ground last spring to lay the foundation for our new Alaskan enterprise. We felt we were doing our small share for the Alaskan economy by bringing this new year 'round cash crop to the attention of Alaskans.

By the way, let me quote from the San Diego, California livestock quotations for the year 1951, as brought to our attention by the Commissioner of Agriculture. Now listen to this, for it is something not many of you would expect. Chinchillas are listed as one of the major livestock products of the country and although they are not as yet in the same bracket as beef, butter and egg industries they are well ahead of turkeys, for example. The figures are as follows: Hogs netted \$1,709,239 . . . Chinchillas \$1,704,400 . . . Turkeys, \$1,691,400. Naturally when crop values run into the millions they are an item worth mentioning. To anyone statistically minded, these figures make a definite impression.

Coming back to Anchorage, the foundation laid, the unit up, we are definitely in the Chinchilla business. If you are one of those who has never seen a Chinchilla, or even if you have, drop by and let us introduce you to Junio, Butch, Crybaby, Andy and all the rest at our little ranch.

There is no law against betting on yourself.

## Canning Contest



Bertha Meiers, winner of the 1951 Alaskan Preservation Contest, showing her prize to the members of the Anchorage Homemakers' Council. The prize, a silver covered vegetable dish is given by the National Garden Institute to the contestant having the best variety of Alaskan foods canned, frozen, dried or preserved in some other manner. The deadline for the 1952 contest is October 15. The winner will be announced at the Homemakers' Short Course to be held at the University of Alaska, October 24 to November 1. Shown in the picture are: (left to right) Audrey Davies, Home Demonstration Agent; Bertha Meiers, 1951 winner; Gloria Vaughan, Council President; Esther Merly, Secretary Pro Tem; Leone Braaksma, Vice-President; Merle Mosher, Treasurer.

A newcomer to Alaska complaining about the lack of hospitality said he had been here a month before he was asked out anywhere. Now he says after two months, he is asked out everywhere he goes.

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# SPENARD -- BOOM CITY, 1952

(This story on the thriving community of Spenard, written by Oliver P. Shaw, will be concluded in the Spring issue.)

One of the real sore spots so far as those who were denied City electricity was concerned and indicative of the real attitude of the City toward the suburban residents was the affair of the 'Sackett Harbor.' The after part of this vessel, which broke in two in the North Pacific, was obtained from the Department of the Interior almost as a gift, ostensibly to "relieve the acute power shortage in the area."

It was generally felt that the addition of some 3000 kwh to the total output available would make it possible for a long waiting list of applicants for electricity to secure at least a minimum of power for elemental household use. This hope proved to be short lived, however, for despite the fact that the Sackett Harbor was the property of the United States Government and made available to the City for the general welfare of the community, the City maintained its policy of no power extensions outside the City.

To add insult to injury, it announced through the newspapers that there was now sufficient power available so that the City would resume the hook-ups of **ELECTRIC HOT WATER HEATERS WITHIN THE CITY.** It should not seem strange, in view of antics like this, that Spenard became extremely concerned that the City might eventually acquire, by adroit manipulation, the complete control of CEA.

Meanwhile CEA had begun construction of its pole line, subject to strikes, material shortages, and con-

tractor difficulties. Most of the poles were set before actual stringing of wire was begun, and a new fight was on. Those physical evidences of Chugach success prodded the City into immediate action, and the congested part of Spenard became the scene of wild activity in the electrical business.

The City electrical department, so long indifferent to the needs of their neighbors to the south, became extremely solicitous of their needs for electricity, and went virtually door to door soliciting consumers. All available manpower was rushed into the area and evenings, Saturdays and Sundays were marked by frenzied attempt to construct transmission lines at time and a half and double time. Sub-standard construction was the rule, and no effort was made to plan an area distribution system.

In general, construction of secondary, rather than of primary line was initiated, mostly paralleling Chugach lines already installed but not energized, and radiating from the central line running along Spenard. This sudden flurry on the part of the City was intended to crush Chugach and eliminate its potential competition by skimming the cream of the potential power consumers and effectively jeopardizing the loan risk for future Chugach development.

In the short but lively history of Anchorage-Spenard relations, this act

on the part of the City ranks as an act beyond justification and beyond condoning. The City, having acted capriciously and arbitrarily, and with a dog-in-the-manger attitude with respect to the much needed power for the outlying districts, now stooped to an all-time low to prevent the suburban residents from helping themselves. Fortunately, the City has since become more enlightened in its attitude toward its neighbors, but some of those under whose direction these ruthless tactics were initiated still participate in City policy making.

Sadly enough, many of the some 450 potential members who were awaiting the completion of the CEA program, and upon whose potential power consumption continued membership fu-

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ture REA construction loans were contingent, had neither the stamina nor the conviction to support CEA at any slight or real inconvenience to themselves. Understandably enough, but a sad commentary on the dog-eat-dog attitude of so many, defections were frequent, due to the intensive campaign by the City.

As this is being written, however, a new dispute has arisen between the City and CEA over the question as to who shall have the right to supply electricity to the 250 unit housing project, Anchor Homes, southeast of Eastchester. Strangely enough, the attorney pleading the case for CEA is the same one who won the preceding case for the City.

The original plans for CEA development apparently made no provision for the generation of power, on the

theory, no doubt, that in Stateside operation the REA is primarily a distribution rather than a generation agency. Thus, when CEA found itself with miles and miles of completed pole line installation, it had no definite and certain source of power. In order to satisfy the insistent consumer demand and actually to get into business, CEA entered into an agreement with Inlet Light and Power Company for the purchase of wholesale power at a rate of approximately 5 cents per kw. This is almost an unheard of rate, particularly in view of the fact that CEA and the Spenard Public Utility District had negotiated a franchise providing consumer rates as low as 4½ cents per kw over 200 per month. Nevertheless, it met with general approval, and CEA threw the switch energizing that portion of the line serving the Airport Heights district.

Hook-ups continued throughout the winter, and by early spring of 1950 virtually all the original members had been served. Since that time CEA has grown tremendously, now serving some 5000 members, and with applications, coming in faster than time and the availability of materials will allow their processing. With the completion of the ARR-CEA steam plant in the railroad yards the critical period will be over for the time being, and with this relatively economical source of power available, it is expected that a

considerable reduction in rates will be in order.

For the time being, then, the power situation for Spenard and other areas has been solved. The success of the venture was not made possible, however, by sitting back and 'letting George do it.' The results to date represent the combined efforts of a great many people of the community, who sacrificed time, energy and real hardship in order that the area might to-

Except for the Post Office at Mt. View, then called East Anchorage, the Anchorage Post Office had been the only office serving this area. The Federal Building erected in 1939, and housing a Postal Department designed for some 4000 people, gradually proved inadequate for the purpose, but no effort on the part of higher Department officials seemed to be made to alleviate the overcrowding and resulting inefficiency and inconvenience.

No house delivery was in effect anywhere, and since the 2000 odd boxes were long since pre-empted, long queues of general delivery patrons blocked the corridors, stairs and even sidewalks in front of the Federal building. This inconvenience, plus the installation of parking meters by the City, in addition to the long trips into Anchorage over something less than the paved roads now existent, prompted a concerted effort by Spenarders to secure adequate Postal service for their community.

No one in the Post Office Department seemed at all anxious to initiate such additional facilities as would be necessary to provide this service, and it evolved upon the residents to supply the necessary will to effect the desired objective. Despite the fact that the growth was obvious, and that any facility installed in Spenard would by the same token reduce the congestion in the Anchorage office, the visiting inspectors required that a door-to-door canvass be made showing the potential patrons, and that maps be submitted showing possible delivery routes.

Again it became necessary for the residents to lift themselves by their bootstraps in lieu of the indifference and apathy of those Federal officials who might have made their task im-

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## Four Little Alaskans



Mary Ann and Betty Lou Melseth. The picture of the little gals and the cocker spaniels was taken in the Agriculturist office.

measurably less difficult.

These requirements were subsequently complied with but the attitude of the Department, which had undoubtedly presumed that the ground-work requested of the residents would be sufficient to discourage them, remained one of indifference and reluctance. New blood was enlisted in the campaign to convince the Post Office Department that it had a real obligation to render a more adequate service to the hundreds of persons who were daily inconvenienced by the totally inadequate and obsolete facilities then provided. Much correspondence ensued with the Office of the Postmaster General in Washington, and many and strange were the excuses offered for the maintainance of the status quo.

One by one these evasions were countered by logical and legitimate

argument. Their strongest argument against a rural free delivery route, that there was no connecting road between the Potter and Sand Lake Roads was resolved by the committee going to work on that project, too. Finally, with the invaluable assistance of E. L. Bartlett, Delegate to Congress, authorization was granted for both a Post Office and a Star route to serve the outlying areas.

The Post Office was established on Jan. 2, 1950 as a fourth class office, in Parker's Store at Fireweed Lane and Spenard Road, with Nancy Parker as Postmaster, and Star service was inaugurated on April 18, 1950 with some 12 patrons and 31 miles of route. At this writing, the Office has advanced to second class, and the appointment of a permanent Postmaster is pending.

(Will be concluded in Spring issue)

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All of the children and teachers at the main school at Chugiak. Inset, the three best salesmen: from left to right, David Pipple, William Cairns and Beverly Haik.

We are grateful to all you boys and girls from Wasilla to Homer who sold subscriptions to the Alaskan Agriculturist this past month. You did a fine job and by your efforts we are able to welcome over a thousand new subscribers to our list this issue. We feel

sure that the folks who bought the subscriptions from you, will enjoy the Agriculturist as much as you enjoy the basketball or other play ground equipment or whatever else you decided to buy with your share of the money collected. Thanks a lot, kids.

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# Arctic Christmas ★ ★

By HANS AUTOR

In centers of habitation, activity and merriment; organ notes mingle with the chimes from God's edifices; gifts exchanged symbolize goodwill to good men; choirs intone carols; the eyes of youth sparkle with expectancy and Christmas moves over the lands.

Upon an island far; lone and sinister; beyond the meridian of time; gather a handful of men to express the profundity that rises in their hearts — a wind-shaken quonset hut harbors an abandoned organ and a bare altar upon which stands a simple cross. The men of Attu are gathered here, of every faith, and reach one another in the communion of spiritual fellowship. The organ notes resound and almost burst the fragile hut as "Holy Night" streams forth from husky throats. — There is no chaplain; but someone remembers a prayer. Some kneeling, and some deeply bowed, murmur with deep emotion the Lord's Prayer. Hands are clasped, and tears glitter in eyes as loved ones far away are remembered. The community with mankind is deeply felt here, and gladness and humility calm their souls.

A languid river winds itself across the icy tundra toward the Arctic Sea. Ice has also encrusted the billowing waters, and lonely dog teams make their way from hamlet to hamlet along the Kuskokwim. — Cold is the night, but warm are the hearts that beat in gladness with the spirit of Christmas. The lights of modern run-

ways vie with the stars above, and over crunching snow stalk befurred figures to a meeting place. — A beam of light opens a path upon the white trail, and invites all comers to the warmth that reaches out from a candle-lit altar. — Youthful voices are singing "O Little Star of Bethlehem" — the community of Bethel, at the mouth of the Kuskokwim, is rejoicing in Christmas. A stranger enters the simple church, and gladdening eyes from Eskimos bid him welcome.

A group now encircles the altar. The old ones of the town, men and women, intone in a strange cadence a Christmas carol in their native tongue — the elder, a true patriarch, chants in typical Eskimo fashion the Lord's Prayer, while the youngsters follow his words in English. The infants upon the women's backs are strangely hushed, as if aware of the sanctity of the hour — a dog lies

quietly upon the threshold of the church. — \* \* \* \*

The glimmering colors of the Northern Lights flutter like angels' wings over the massiveness of Mt. Denali. The Cathedral Mountains with their white spires become a prayer that rises to the dome of heaven, while the scintillating flutter of hosts sing of the Glory of His Creation — the airliner, carrying men, women and children from a northern city to the new Arctic metropolis, drones steadily between the spaciousness below and above. Its silver body glows in the

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inter-play of light from stars, aura and the reflecting snows. The chief pilot faces the passengers: "Merry Christmas all;" and responsive greetings echo through the flying ship — a young stewardess, with a beatific countenance, starts "Noel" —

The Christmas carol is still ringing through the plane, when the glimmering runway of Anchorage spreads its carpet of welcome. The many homes of the city are aglow with festive lights, and multicolored Christmas trees stud the countryside with their heart-warming gladness. The plane is met by homefolk: Daddy, Mary, John and Jane fall into each other's arms. "Glade Yule"; "A Merry Christmas;" shouts of joy and youthful questions accompany the homecomers to their hearths.

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## POET'S CORNER

### Fairy Land

By **ESTHER McDANIEL**

We awoke bright and early on Christmas morn  
 With thoughts of turkey and pie.  
 And lo! Mother Goose had been picking her geese  
 In her fairyland up in the sky!

She'd been busily plucking them all night long  
 And the white feathers drifting below — —  
 Had covered the earth with a blanket of white,  
 A glistening holiday snow.

The old broken stump that yesterday 'eve  
 Was too common and drab for words,  
 Was neatly spread with a snowy white cloth — —  
 A breakfast table for birds!

We sprinkled their breakfast of holiday crumbs — —

They chirped out their thanks by the score,  
 We laughed at the tracks their tiny feet made  
 As they hopped about begging for more.

And the garbage heap at the back of the yard  
 That for weeks has had me in a stew—  
 Had overnight been completely transformed  
 To an Eskimo fairy's igloo!

Yes, — — some people long for the bursting through  
 Of the first daffodil in the spring,  
 While others await the robin's return  
 For the thrill that his first song can bring.

To decide between welcome summer rains — —  
 And autumn leaves — ummm — that's hard.

But I think the greatest thrill is to wake  
 And find Fairyland in your back yard!

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## Lone Land Christmas Trees

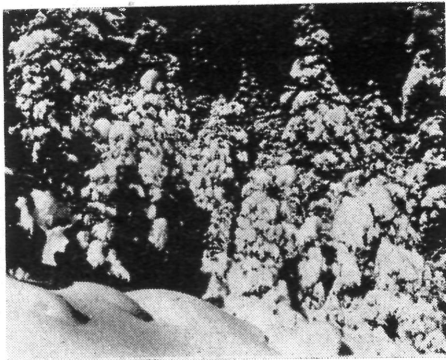


Photo by Hewitt

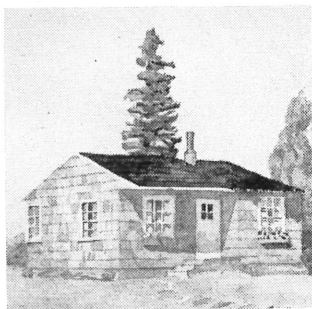
By E. E. EMERSON

No Star of Bethlehem adorns  
These trees on Christmas night;  
But high o're head the North Star  
sheds  
Its guiding light.

Each tree itself a Christmas tree  
Though perhaps unseen by man;  
They stretch away across the gray  
Expanse of a lonely land.

The rabbits snug beneath the spread  
Of snowy limbs so warm;  
The Children of the forest here  
Are sheltered from the storm.

Each one a thing of beauty  
In rarest Ermine dressed;  
A million million Christmas trees  
Each one just like the rest.



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## Nature's Lesson

Sam James

At dawn the sky was over-cast  
The breeze was now a chilling blast  
And I could see that ere the morrow  
My garden would have come to sorrow

Of courses there remained but one  
The harvest must today be done  
For quickly I must get inside  
Those vegetables, which were my pride

At breakfast it began to rain  
With rivulets slanting down the pane  
But don I must my coat and boots  
And hie me out to gather roots

The cattle lowed beneath the shed  
The pigs snored on, in their snug bed

And on the porch my old dog stayed  
While in the rain I plied my spade

The ants now worked within the  
mound  
The bees had honey by the pound  
The squirrel slept in his snug tree  
As full of nuts as he could be

But I the smartest of them all  
Had frittered off the golden fall  
And now must work out in the rain  
It served me right and made it plain

That sunny days were made for  
working

So rainy days could be for shirking  
And man shall fare as he shall earn  
And still can much from nature learn.

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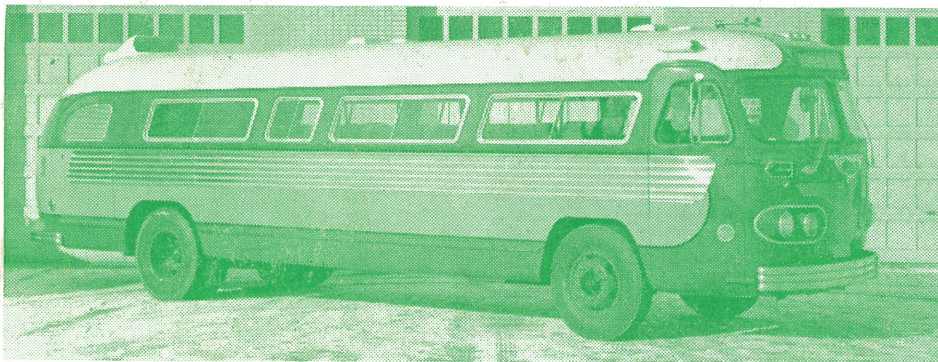
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