



This picture shows only half the village of Point Hope. The row of houses on the left is on one of the two main streets. In the foreground is St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, established in 1890. In the distance on the right is the government school with the teachers' quarters. Beyond the village is the Arctic Ocean stretching westward.

# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ALASKAN ESKIMO

Edited by James W. VanStone\*

## Introduction

**T**HE writer of the following autobiography is a resident of Point Hope, a village on the northwestern coast of Alaska about one hundred and fifty miles north of Kotzebue Sound. Point Hope is one of the oldest and largest Eskimo settlements in Alaska and is occupied by people whose economy depends largely upon the hunting of sea mammals.

The hunting activities of the Point Hope Eskimos vary with the seasons of the year. The small hair seal is hunted at all times when the pack ice lies against the point but most of the other animals important to the economy are migratory, as are a variety of birds. Bowhead whales, walrus and beluga are taken only during the spring while polar bears are hunted on the pack ice during the winter months. Caribou are hunted in the fall in high country a few miles northeast of Point Hope and in summer when they come down to the coast near the village. The time of arrival of the various sea mammals at Point Hope is largely dependent upon the movements of the sea ice, and this is responsible for the cyclical nature of hunting activities.

Hunting huge bowhead whales is perhaps the most important aspect of the Point Hope subsistence economy and requires specialized equipment and techniques. Every spring these animals migrate through Bering Strait and pass near the Point Hope spit as they move northward into the Beaufort Sea. They are hunted from skin boats, just as they have been for centuries, and the blubber and meat are stored in underground caches for consumption during the summer and fall months.

The people of Point Hope have had direct contact with Europeans for nearly one hundred and fifty years, but it was only with the advent of commercial whaling in the Arctic about sixty or seventy years ago that this contact became extensive. Since the collapse of the whaling industry about 1910, the only white men to occupy the area permanently have been traders, school teachers, missionaries and, in recent years, military personnel. Although Eskimo hunting methods and techniques have changed considerably due to contact with whites, the yearly cycle of subsistence activities at Point Hope remains much the same as it was prior to the arrival of European and American culture, and the people are still largely dependent on hunting for their livelihood.

The increased emphasis on national defense in the post-war years has resulted in extensive military construction in the far North. Point Hope men have been successful in obtaining employment on these projects during the summer months and have thus been able to obtain the cash income

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necessary for satisfying wants created by familiarity with American material culture. The fact that construction is possible in northern Alaska only during the summer makes it possible for the men of Point Hope to work away from the village at a time when there is little opportunity for hunting. Thus, hunting is still of vital importance during the fall, winter and spring, with summer employment being integrated into the seasonal round.

I was resident at Point Hope from September 1955 until August 1956 conducting a community study sponsored by the Arctic Aeromedical Laboratory, Ladd Air Force Base, Alaska, and the University of Alaska. During this time the writer of the following autobiography was one of my closest friends among the younger men. At my suggestion, he wrote out the story of his life, a labourious and lengthy process for a person with little formal education and practically no experience in expressing himself in written English.

This autobiography is presented just as it was written except for corrections in spelling and punctuation. The essential features of the writer's narrative style have been retained, but some grammatical errors have been corrected. It is reasonably typical of the life of a young Point Hope man even though the writer has had more experience outside the village than many young men of his age. At various points during the autobiography, explanatory footnotes have been included in order to clarify certain statements and events. However, these have been kept to a minimum.

JAMES W. VANSTONE

### **This is my life**

My name is L. K. I was born on March 16, 1928, at Point Hope, Alaska and I am the son of Chief Attungoruk's daughter.<sup>1</sup> My Eskimo name is Attungoruk.

This is how I have lived for the past twenty-seven years. I don't really know how I lived when I was a baby, but this is how my sister told me I was when a baby. She tells me that I was a restless kid. I think that must be how kids always are, especially boys. She tells me that I used to cry for butter and they used to put about a half inch of butter on my bread. That certainly sounds foolish, but it is true. And there is another thing; I used to eat half a coffee can of raisins. I must have had a stomach like a wolf

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<sup>1</sup>Attungoruk achieved considerable power and prestige in the village during the last decade of the nineteenth century through the acquisition of large amounts of trade goods from the commercial whaling vessels that stopped at Point Hope to trade for baleen. He was the primary spokesman for the Eskimos in their dealings with the whalers and is said to have exercised dictatorial powers over his fellow villagers. Attungoruk's downfall came when he began taking other men's wives by force; for this he was eventually murdered.

when I was a kid. Once my sister let me fall off the table. The table was about two and a half feet high. She was holding me on the table and she let me fall off to the floor. She thought I was hurt but I was all right one hour later.

When I was about three years old, I started playing around all by myself. There is a stream about sixty-five yards from our house and my sister said that I used to go home all wet from that stream. I must have been an awful one to take care of as I was always getting my clothes wet. When I was about four years old I started following my father when he hunted ducks.<sup>1</sup> He said I used to get in front of his shotgun and then I would get a scolding from him. After that happened a few times, he didn't want me to follow him any more.

Once, I remember, when I was about four and a half years old, I was in the corner all day for stealing some bread; I was in the corner all day without eating. This was kind of tough for me so I stopped stealing bread. Sometimes my father would try to tell me how I should live and how he wants me to be. But it didn't seem to get into my head somehow. All I wanted to do was play around with the boys.

I never used to like to listen to people who talked about God. All I wanted to do was keep away from them. I guess I was just a wicked little boy. Yes, I did things I shouldn't do, and stayed away from good things. There was a priest that I didn't like very much. I used to try and keep away from him and he used to always give me a bad time when I went to church because he wanted me to listen when he started preaching. I used to swear at him in my mind; I sure hated his guts. I sure was wrong when I did those things to the preacher. I even used to make faces at my Sunday-school teacher if I didn't want to stay in church any longer. I sure hated to go to church, but I knew if I didn't I would really get the worst punishment from my father. One time at Christmas I was the only boy who didn't get any candy from the mission because of being disobedient in church.<sup>2</sup> Also I got lots of spankings from my parents for doing those things,<sup>3</sup> and from the missionary too!

Sometimes I would try my best to be a good boy but pretty soon I would wind up in some kind of a mess. Once I was playing out with the boys and we were throwing rocks at the poor birds. I accidentally hit a bird with a rock and killed it and that was my first bird. My mother put up

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<sup>1</sup>This is a considerably earlier age than most Point Hope boys begin hunting with their fathers. However, since duck hunters do not move around a great deal they occasionally take their very young sons with them and the child will be expected to sit very quietly and not disturb his father.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas' Mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church was established at Point Hope in 1890. It is the only church in the village.

<sup>3</sup>This seems to be an unusual reaction to church attendance. Most young boys seem to like to go and particularly enjoy Sunday-school. However, the situation doubtless varies, and is probably dependent somewhat on the personality of the missionary who is in residence. Today, Sunday-school and church attendance does not seem to be compulsory in most families but attendance at the former is high.

a little feast for the first bird that I killed, since that is the custom.<sup>1</sup> When a boy gets his first seal or any kind of animal, they always put up some kind of feast.

When I was about five or six years old I used to trap ground squirrels in the falltime about a mile from the village. I was doing okay but I was always too lazy to skin them. My father told me that if I didn't skin them he would take the traps away and that made it hard on me. I liked to trap but I had to skin them. So I started thinking about it. There were some other boys trapping with me so I started giving the squirrels away instead of taking them home. Now that is a funny way to hunt, but I was doing it for almost a season. When I didn't give them away, I sold them for some toys. One time I sold three squirrels for a bow and arrow. Once in a while I would take one squirrel home when I felt like skinning it. Then one day I came home from trapping with one squirrel. I washed my hands and went over to the cupboard and was going to fix something to eat but my dad said to wait a minute. He asked me how did I get my bow and arrow. I figured that he must have found out already so I told him the truth. Then he asked me why I sold the squirrels, and I told him that I was too lazy to skin them. He took his belt off and started spanking me until I cried. I think my sitter was kind of blue that evening, but I asked for it so he gave it to me real good.<sup>2</sup>

When I was six years old, I started going to school. The teachers were kind of strict. My father talked to the teachers and told them not to be afraid to punish me if I was a bad boy. So I was doing all right until it started snowing. We used to throw snowballs at each other during recess-time. One time I was throwing snowballs at the girls and I hit one girl right on the eye with a hard snowball. She told the teacher, and he made me sit in the corner all afternoon with my head down. He told me that I would get it worse if I did something like that again. So I started watching my step from that time on. I was doing fine until I saw one of the boys playing a mouth organ. I sure wanted one like that but my father didn't have enough money to buy one. I knew that this boy always left it in his jacket pocket in the storm-shed so I asked the teacher if I could go to the toilet. He said that I could so I took the mouth organ out of the boy's pocket on my way to the toilet. I thought I was going to get away with it. Later on people found out and I was in a bad spot this time. I got three spankings

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<sup>1</sup>In former times, it was customary for the community to recognize the emergence of a new hunter. The first of any species of bird or animal was usually given away to the old people whose good will was essential for the continued success of the young hunter. Today, some families still observe this custom but most do not, although there is usually some recognition of the event by the family. Occasionally, at the time of the spring whaling feast, gifts will be distributed by a woman whose son or grandson killed his first animal of any species during the preceding year.

<sup>2</sup>Discipline such as is described here is probably rare in the village. Active, responsible participation in the affairs of the household at an early age is conducive to the early acquisition of an adult outlook and discipline seems to play a relatively minor role.

in the same day; one from the teacher, one from my father, and one from my sister. Man, I couldn't sit down for almost a week! I swore to God I wouldn't do anything like that again.

Well, the days passed and I was trying to live like a good little boy. In wintertime, after school was out in the afternoon about 3 P.M., my mother always told me to stand outside the door and watch to see if my father was coming home from hunting. If he was dragging a seal then I would meet him on his way home and help him drag that seal. I think every boy does that after school. If he didn't get any, my mother would go to some people and get us something to eat. Everybody does that sort of thing. I mean, the mother of the house goes out to beg some food for the family if her husband doesn't get any seals. Sometimes our family would have a very hard time if the weather was bad and there was no seal hunting and no seals to eat. Sometimes we would have lots of things to eat, but not all the time. Yes, I guess I was hungry lots of times. But it sure is good to have friends around the village because the people always share with each other and that is a good deal for them.<sup>1</sup>

In the evening about 6:30 or 7:00 P.M. the older boys would gather and start playing football and I would be one of them too. I wasn't a very good player, but they would choose partners and would always choose me too. Then we would start playing football at night.<sup>2</sup> It was dark, but there would always be moonlight and we would play until about 9:00 P.M. That is when the curfew bell always rang. I sure used to hate that curfew bell because I liked to play out, but we had orders from our parents that we had to be home by 9:00 P.M. on school nights. If we didn't go home on time maybe we would really catch it.

Then in the springtime, maybe around the last part of May, my father would make me a sling for duck hunting. There are always lots of ducks at that time of year. It is lots of fun to hunt ducks when the weather is warm. I would go out duck hunting with the sling and sometimes I would get one and sometimes nothing. Sometimes there would be wounded ducks out on the ice and I would go after them and catch them. Then when I got home I told my folks that I got the duck with my sling, and that was a lie. I got by with that part because they didn't know how I got the duck.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes I got three or four wounded ducks and I told them I got them with my sling. I kept that lie a secret until I was about twenty years old.

<sup>1</sup>Sharing is an important aspect of life at Point Hope and families who are hard pressed to obtain enough to eat often rely on relatives and neighbours to help them in time of need. Such sharing may take the form of borrowing food and supplies, or members of a hard-up family may simply "visit around" at meal times.

<sup>2</sup>Eskimo football is a game which bears more resemblance to soccer than it does to American football. The goals are several hundred yards apart and one team tries to kick the ball across the other team's goal.

<sup>3</sup>Today small boys shoot at the shore birds that frequent the slough that runs through the village. A surprisingly large number of birds are killed, and the youngsters achieve considerable accuracy, sometimes at great distances, with their slings. It is doubtful whether such slings could be used against relatively high flying ducks. Birds grounded by shotgun wounds are, however, occasionally killed by children with slings.

I was almost eight years old when I started smoking. Once I was smoking in the old well with some other boys and an older boy caught us.<sup>1</sup> He told my parents and my father went after me with his belt. I tried to run away from him, but he caught me and smacked me with his belt right on my butt. Then he took me home and I was walking ahead of him just like a prisoner. But it was my own fault because I just didn't know how to stay away from a sinful life.

My mother would tell me to wash my own clothes every Saturday. I got six sisters but I still have to wash my own clothes. My father told my sisters not to wash my clothes until I learned to be a good boy. Sometimes I would be so mad that I would just dump my clothes in the tub and rinse them out and hang them up. So I still wore dirty clothes after I washed them.

Also when I was about eight years old I started learning how to gamble. Several of us boys would get together at some place where no one would see us and one of the boys would have a deck of cards. We would play for anything. Sometimes it would be cigarettes, pipe tobacco and other little things. When I went home, I would put them behind the house and cover them with sand. But sometimes I would lose a lot of little things and maybe they would be my mother's cigarettes and my father's pipe tobacco. I used to get these things on Sunday evenings because my parents always visited friends and there would be nobody at home. I would sneak in the house and take about a pack of cigarettes and some pipe tobacco. Man, I really was a sinner in those days!

Then one evening another kid and I were playing on the beach and it was about 10:00 or 10:30 in the evening in summer. We got into a skin boat that was pulled up on the beach. I happened to have a pocket knife with me so I told my boy friend that we should cut a hole in the skin. He wanted to do it too so I took out my little red pocket knife and cut a hole right in the bottom of the boat. He cut a hole too, right next to mine. When we were leaving, somehow I dropped my knife and I didn't miss it until the next day. This knife was given to me on my birthday by my brother-in-law. So the next morning I woke up and was getting some water. When I walked in the house with the bucket, there was my sister sitting on a chair. I didn't pay any attention to her until she asked me where my knife was. I said that it must be around the house some place. She told me to start looking for it but quick. I started looking for it but I couldn't find the darn thing. I didn't even know that I had dropped the knife. While I was looking, my sister said, "What's this?" and she showed me the knife. I think my face was just red when she showed me the knife. Then she wanted to know where I was yesterday and I said, "Oh, playing out with the boys." And she said, "You sure must have played out when you cut a hole in the skin boat. Why did you do it?" Then she started slapping my hand. I

<sup>1</sup>Smoking is taken up by a number of older schoolboys without, or in spite of, parental objection, but the teachers do not allow smoking in the school building at any time by school-age boys and girls. Most smaller children are aware of the fact that smoking is considered "not good for kids."

couldn't pick up anything the next day my hands were so swollen. Yes, I sure did get all kinds of punishments, but my life never changed at all and I don't know why.

After that my father gave me a job to keep the water buckets full, chop wood every day, and feed the dogs every night.<sup>1</sup> Those jobs sure fixed me up; I mean I was tired every night and hardly stayed out in the evenings. And I was only eight and a half years old when I was doing all that work.

At about my ninth year I started hunting seals in the springtime and that was fun because I love shooting and I wasn't such a bad shot. But the first seal I got, my parents gave it away to some old woman and she thanked me for it. Of course, I was a little disgusted when someone took my first seal away from me. But that has been the custom from the beginning.

Well, there was another thing I had to watch — my shells. I had a .22 cal. single shot rifle and my dad always told me not to waste my shells. I loved to shoot with my .22 but my dad always counted the shells before he gave them to me so he would know how many times I missed. If I missed a lot of times I would get a scolding for missing those seals. He was wrong on that part because I can't learn to use a gun that way. However, I couldn't explain it to him because I knew he would get mad if I tried.

Then when I was about ten years old I started shooting a shotgun. I was a pretty good shot with that shotgun. Sometimes I would get three or four ducks with one shot, and that's pretty good for a ten-year-old kid. My shotgun was a double-barrelled, 20-gauge and I was better than some of the other boys. I knew one boy who used fifteen shots without getting even one duck. That was kind of bad luck for him. I think I would get bad punishment if I was that unlucky with my shooting.<sup>2</sup>

Now I think I will tell you how I hunted when I started hunting alone. It was springtime, about the first part of June. My father was out on the ice during the night, and when he went home he woke me up and told me to take over.<sup>3</sup> It was about 9:00 A.M. when I jumped out of bed and started making coffee for my father. After I made the coffee, I drank a cup and had a little meat for my breakfast and then I went down to the ice to where my father had been sitting. While I was sitting on a piece of caribou skin on top of the ice, it started getting foggy. I couldn't see a thing that was more

<sup>1</sup>A boy begins to be helpful around the house when he is about eleven or twelve years old, although sometimes as young as eight or nine if he has no older brothers. He will get up first in the morning to make coffee, and will do other chores such as filling lamps, hauling water, and feeding dogs. A boy of twelve or thirteen can be of great assistance in the family, leaving the adult males free to devote full time to food getting and household activities requiring skill and experience. The age at which a child begins to make important contributions to the running of the household largely depends on the number of older brothers and sisters he has.

<sup>2</sup>Punishment for lack of skill in hunting seems to be rare. A boy is usually not entrusted with a large supply of expensive ammunition until he has proved his ability as a hunter.

<sup>3</sup>When seals are plentiful in the late spring, hunting is carried on continuously to take advantage of the long hours of daylight.



than twenty-five feet away from me. This was the first time I had ever been out on the ice alone and I began thinking about which way I would go home. The seals would come up through the water, but I wouldn't take a shot. All I was worried about was the fog and which direction I was sitting. Good thing it wasn't windy that time or I could have drifted out. I didn't make a move that day until about six in the evening. Yes, I could have been a dead duck that spring or a feast for the seals. What a hunter! Didn't even get a duck that day. All I worried about was my life and I was scared to death.<sup>1</sup>

Not very long after that, in falltime, I was out hunting owls with my .22 rifle. I shot one about one hundred feet away from me but when I got close to it, its eyes were as big as marbles and I got scared. I think the owl was dead but I just left it there. Yes, I was quite a hunter in those days. When I was in school I used to hunt only on Saturday. Sometimes I would get only five .22 shells from my father. He didn't want to give me a whole box because he knew I would finish it for nothing. Sometimes I sure did get mad at my father but I couldn't say anything to him.

When I was about twelve years old we used to play out in the evenings by the store. There were about three or four boys and I was one of them, the worst one probably. There were a lot of empty drums outside the store. The lids were loose so we opened one and started inhaling from those drums. Well, I think I was the first one to do it and those other boys went right ahead and started inhaling too. We sure did get drunk with it.<sup>2</sup> Well, we thought we had our fun, but we weren't doing our bodies any good. We were just shortening our lives. Yes, some people sure get crazy, but I don't think kids will ever beat me around here.

Then I became a lover. What a lover! That is the time when I had my fun. We were in school and I happened to sit right behind the girl and she was as pretty as a doll. Well, one day in the afternoon I was a little late to my lunch. All the other school kids were gone already and she and I were all alone in the school storm-shed. When I looked at her she was smiling at me so I just grabbed her and kissed her. She wasn't even trying to get away from me or anything. When I went to eat my lunch I couldn't forget her. Sometimes I even smiled to myself because it was my first kiss and I was proud of it. Pretty soon it was Valentine's Day. We had our games and danced and they started passing the Valentines. As they passed them they passed me one too! It was a pretty one. It was folded so I opened it and read who it was from. And by golly, it was from the girl I kissed! I didn't do anything to her right away but in the evenings we always played out until 9 o'clock and she always played out too. So I started watching her to see when she would go home, so I could take her home. I watched and

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<sup>1</sup>Boys are seldom allowed out on the ice unless accompanied by an adult, since the strong currents that pass the Point Hope spit are constantly moving the ice making it extremely dangerous even for experienced hunters.

<sup>2</sup>Inhaling gasoline fumes produces light-headedness and causes an individual to appear intoxicated.

finally she started off toward her home. I sneaked away from the boys and went around the other direction and caught up with her. I grabbed her around the neck and kissed her. I mean we were in love, so I took her home and we stayed outside the door for awhile. I kissed her quite a few times and went on home.

Well, we were friends for quite a long time. Sometimes we would go to church together. That's the evening service because nobody would see us in the dark. And she used to tell me not to go around with other girls. I tried to do everything she said because I wanted her for myself.<sup>1</sup>

When I was thirteen years old, my parents went camping about five miles to Jabbertown in the springtime to hunt seals and ugruks.<sup>2</sup> All of us went camping for about two months. Well, there was another family camped near us and they happened to have a girl about my age and she wasn't bad looking. So we used to go to church in the morning and it would take us a long time to walk up there. After church we would go to the village and eat our lunch and then I would walk back to Jabbertown with this girl. While we were going home, there was nobody around and the first thing I knew I was making love to her. Now I am getting to be a two-timer. Every time when we played out and both my girls were there, I left them alone. I had a hard time trying to be nice to them because if one of them found out, I would lose both of them. One Sunday when we were going home to Jabbertown together she started telling me not to look at the other girls. So I told her that if I'm not going to look at the other girls, I'll just leave her alone. Then she started crying and told me not to leave her alone. After we finished camping and started moving to the village, she went over to me while I was alone and gave me a pair of yarn gloves; they were pretty ones too. And I began to worry how I would act when we got back to the village. This second girl I had was really in love with me. I wanted to tell her that I got a girl in the village but I didn't know how to start.

Well, when school started, my first girl found out that I had another girl and boy, did she blow her top! She wouldn't even look at me any more. The same day my second girl found out that I was going around with another one. Man, was I in a mess. Nobody loves me and no girl friend. So I went without a girl friend for about two months and then my second girl friend came back to me.

Well, a damn fool like me had to quit school while I was in the fourth grade. The reason why I quit school was that my father was getting old and

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<sup>1</sup>The writer seems to have exhibited an interest in girls sooner than most Point Hope boys, but it is true that school romances are not rare. Since overt love making is not part of the cultural pattern, the attempts at secrecy described by the writer must be fairly typical.

<sup>2</sup>In early June, following the spring whaling feast, many families move down the spit in the vicinity of Jabbertown where they live in tents for most of the summer. Since the shore line in that region is slightly indented and free from strong currents, the ice remains longer and seal hunting is better.

he couldn't hunt much and we would be hungry before he got his cheque.<sup>1</sup> He was getting \$15 a month from the government for his old-age assistance. We were getting mail only once a month when the weather was good and sometimes we didn't get mail for three months, and that is a long time to wait for a cheque. So I felt sorry for my poor father and I started hunting too. Well, he wasn't sorry for me when he used to give me all that punishment, but I felt sorry for him. Sometimes we would have nothing in the house; nothing to eat, no fuel and it would be like that for a long time when the weather was bad. I wasn't very lucky in hunting because I couldn't stand the cold weather that time when I was a young kid. Besides, my gun wasn't very good and I didn't know all about hunting. Some days I would get two seals if I was lucky, but sometimes I would get nothing day after day. I would have to go home with nothing after walking all day and my poor mother would be visiting people for something to eat day after day. Sometimes I would go to some of my relatives and have supper with them. So I think it is very good to have friends and relatives.

Well, I was doing fine with my girl friend for a long time. We got along fine and I don't fool around with other girls any more. Then I found out that my girl was two-timing me. But I didn't really care much, and I just let her go the way she wanted. I was fifteen years old and going around lonesome looking for the one girl that I could trust. Early in the spring when I was fifteen my father got sick and then I was on the spot because I had to do all the work. I mean I was taking over my father's work and I wasn't taking it easy at all.

One night there was a dance at the school and while I was dancing around, I danced with a girl about three years younger than me and she wasn't bad-looking at all. I always heard from people that she was a good worker and pretty smart in school. So I got around to her once in a while and finally started going around with her. I knew she used to knit with yarn and make good gloves, so I asked her to make a pair for me. It was the best knitting I see in my life so I paid her \$1.00. Well, a dollar used to be a lot of money in my younger days.

I was getting happier every day but my father was getting worse. My mother was taking care of him as best she could but he was getting worse. Finally the teacher sent him to the hospital and about two weeks later he passed away in the Nome hospital. What a sorrowful day for us when we got the news but we couldn't help it. I started thinking to myself how I am going to take care of my mother and sisters. I wasn't able to go to work to earn money because I was a little too young. So the next summer I went

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<sup>1</sup>Since the writer was the only boy in the family and the youngest child, it was doubtless necessary for him to take a more active part in the support of the family at a relatively early age. At this time, Old Age Assistance cheques were considerably smaller than they are at the present time. Today, territorial law stipulates that a person must remain in school until the age of sixteen or until the eighth grade is completed. Many young Point Hope men simply leave school when they reach the age of sixteen and then will try to rationalize their action as being due to family necessity.

to Kotzebue for about a month to try and get a job longshoring.<sup>1</sup> It sure was a big help for us but it wasn't enough for the winter. So I started carving ivory bracelets and sold them to the native store. It was a great help to us when I sold them.<sup>2</sup> So we got along pretty good during the winter, and my girl friend and I were getting along fine too. Sometimes I would buy her something from the store after I sold the bracelets. Sometimes I would sell one bracelet for \$9.00 or \$10.00.

I was sixteen years old when I got a white fox. I was hunting one day and as I walked along the ice I saw a white fox. It was running toward me so I stopped and took my gun out of my gun case and while I was trying to take it off, the fox saw me and started to run away. I started running after it with my gun. I ran and ran for almost an hour and got ahead of it. Then I stopped behind an iceberg to wait for it and a few seconds later it came along and was only about fifty feet from me. I shot it right there. Boy, was I tired! I sat there for about twenty minutes and smoked my cigarettes before going home with that fox. I was sure happy and after I skinned the fox and dried it, I sold it to the store for \$12.00.

When summer came I didn't go any place to work because I was making pretty good money carving ivory. When big boats came in, the people would go out in their skin boats and sell ivory to the white people. Well, I would be one of them too and sometimes I would sell four or five bracelets and some other little things. We would get about two or three ships in the summertime. Sometimes I would be tired of carving but I knew if I didn't do anything, we would be hungry again. Yes, I found out how hard my father was working when he was taking care of us and how hard he worked to keep us warm and lively. And I also found out how hard my mother worked to keep us from being hungry. She used to walk around to people and beg for some food, but still I gave her a bad time. But when I started making a little money, I tried my best to pay her back and see that she had plenty to eat and smokes and clothing. But it was not enough yet. Well, I did the best I could to try and help my mother, but not my father. I would try to pay him back too if he had lived longer, but his life ended before I could start helping him. Why did I do those bad things when I was a boy? But it is too late to worry about it now.

I was seventeen years old when my girl told me in falltime that she was going to school at White Mountain. Well, I told her not to go, but her parents were the ones who gave her orders, and I couldn't do anything about it. She said that she didn't want to go, but her father wanted her to go to school. I knew it would help her, but I didn't know whether she would be my girl when she came back. I liked that girl so much that I sure did hate to see her go away from me. Now what shall I do? Shall I get another

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<sup>1</sup>During the summer, when boats are unloading supplies for the stores in Kotzebue, there are employment opportunities for boys as longshoremen. At the present time the wage rate is \$1.75 an hour, but ten years ago it was much lower.

<sup>2</sup>Some villagers make considerable money carving ivory bracelets and disposing of them through the village store.

girl or shall I wait? Well, the spring came and I went to Kotzebue because she was heading for White Mountain to school.<sup>1</sup> Now what shall I do? So I told her that I would wait for her until she came back, even if that is a long time. She told me the same thing and left the next morning; so now I was alone.

Well, I finally got to be eighteen years old so now I could go to work to earn money. It was kind of hard for me the first time that I started working. I went to Candle and got a job at the mining company.<sup>2</sup> I used to get scared of some of the boys when they got drunk, but I never used to drink that time. Later on one of the boys started asking me to take a shot of whiskey. I refused it because I was scared I would get caught by some of the older people around the mining camp. That boy told me that one shot of whiskey wouldn't make me drunk. So I took it. Now that was the first drink I ever had and I thought I would never take another.

Well, I worked and I was getting along well with my boss. I was blasting ice with dynamite and was getting more money than the other boys who worked with me. My job was over about the middle part of September and after that I was paid off and I went to Kotzebue. I had meant to go home that month but I got stuck in Kotzebue. So finally, I went to Nome instead and started working again. Yes, that was the first time I ever saw a city and I thought it was a very big city. I had a good time in Nome until I took a drink. It was wine and it tasted good at first, but two hours later I passed out cold. When I woke up I was on a very hard bed. Yes, I woke up in bed and it was in jail. Boy, did I have a hangover! I had been paid by my boss the night I got drunk but when I woke up, my wallet was gone. I didn't have anything in my pocket and I was worried about my money. It was more than \$80.00. It must have been 8 o'clock in the morning when someone woke me up. About 1 o'clock a policeman took me upstairs. When I went into the court room the judge was talking to me with a cigarette in his mouth. It didn't seem as if we were in the court but in a private house talking to each other. I never heard of a judge smoking in the city hall and I sure was surprised to see him smoking. Well, he turned me loose but said that if I was caught again, I would have to serve some time until I could learn to be good. It was too much for me to stay even over night on those hard beds with no mattress. I got out of that mud hole the next day and got my money back. The police gave it to me just before I got out and I really was happy. I didn't celebrate though, but went home right away and hit the sack.

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<sup>1</sup>The Alaska Native Service formerly operated a school located at White Mountain, Alaska. At a time when the Point Hope school taught only the first six grades, it was necessary for an individual who was interested in going to high school to complete the seventh and eighth grades at White Mountain before entering the high school at Mt. Edgecumbe near Sitka, Alaska.

<sup>2</sup>Today there is relatively little gold mining at Candle but in the days before the post-war construction boom, it was one of the main sources of summer employment for men from the coastal villages.

Well, it was just about springtime when I went back to Candle to work and I figured I would go back home after I was through working. I worked until September again and then went to Kotzebue. I was going home but went to Fairbanks instead and got a job working for the Alaska Railroad. When I first got to Fairbanks, I thought it was a beautiful place. I didn't know which way to go when I first got to town and I was all alone on 2nd Avenue. There was a married couple from my home that lived in Fairbanks and right away I started looking around for them. I finally found them and sure was glad to see them.<sup>1</sup> When they first took me to their home, I didn't know which way they were leading me. But anyway, we got to the house and there was enough room for me to stay there. They had a son and they told him to get my baggage from the airport which was at Week's Field. After we ate our supper they took me to town and started showing me around the town. Yes, I saw all kinds of people; good-looking, bad-looking and ugly-looking. So we went to the movie and then went home. Yes, I sure did see things that I never saw before. The only places I wanted to go was to a movie and pool halls: no bars!

Well, I worked until the last part of November and I sort of wanted to go home but still I liked Fairbanks better than my home. Yes, some people can get crazy just for little things. So I spent my Christmas in Fairbanks and sure had lots of fun. Finally, in January, 1948, I got another job and went to work for the Alaska Railroad again. They took me down between Fairbanks and Anchorage and I was on a section gang making \$1.47 an hour. I had a good place to save my money out there where there was no place to spend it. I was getting along fine with my boss and he liked me too. So I stayed on that job until about the middle of May and had saved almost everything I made. Then I went to Anchorage. Yes, Anchorage was a bigger place than Fairbanks and I liked it better than Fairbanks. I stayed in Anchorage for about one month without doing anything. I couldn't get a job but I had enough money to fool around. Well, later on I got a job, and this time I started working for the bus station. I was a grease-monkey this time. They started me at \$120.00 a week so I was making pretty good money. Yes, I was saving money all the time and I never spent any of it for liquor. After I spent the night in the Nome jail, I had enough.

I worked until about September and then went back to Fairbanks again. Yes, I was quite busy in those years. That same fall I got a letter from the Alaska Railroad that my job was open any time I wanted to go to work for them again. So I just took my old job again. That winter I wrote to my girl and told her to go to Anchorage in springtime. I told her I would be there the first part of June. But she didn't come, and she told me in her letter that she might not go back to school if she went to Anchorage. Yes, I was twenty-one years old now and I thought I might marry her when she came to Anchorage. She was pretty smart about that because

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<sup>1</sup>When people from Point Hope come to Fairbanks they always stay with one of the three former Point Hope families now living there.

she knew I would ask her if I saw her in person. But still it was good for her to be in school a little longer. Yes, I saved a lot of money because I thought my girl might come to Anchorage. I was quite anxious to get married but it didn't work out that way. I didn't want other girls either. I figured I might get her some day if nobody beat me to her.

In January of 1950 I started working for Wells Alaska Motors in Fairbanks, but I didn't have such good luck that time. I hurt my right knee; didn't break it but just cut a few spots on the knee and stayed in the hospital until February. I didn't try to go back to my old job but started looking for a new one. Well, I joined the Culinary Worker's Union and got a job at Eielson Air Force Base as a dish-washer. It was the 8th of February when I started working for Universal Foods. I worked two weeks there as a dish-washer and then they put me on cook's helper. Well, I would peel potatoes and onions and get them ready for the cook. I was working about one month as cook's helper and then they made me a second cook. Yes, I was making \$56.00 a week and finally \$112.00 a week, and I was cooking until August, middle part. Then I got transferred to Cape Lisburne and that is only about forty or forty-five miles from my home. I was happier when I got close to my home. I was twenty-two years old when I went to Cape Lisburne and lots of boys from home were working there. Boy, I sure was glad to see them after all the years I been away from home. But what did I do? I started drinking to be happy with them. Yes, I was drinking almost every day when I got to Cape Lisburne. I was crazy, but it is my own life. Three weeks later I was fired by my boss. So I went home that same fall with \$150.00 in my pocket. Of all those years of working, where did the money go? To liquor. What a shame on me that I went home with nothing but the liquor I got in my suitcase. Yes, it's no fun to be dumb like me. For all those years I had been working for nothing! Besides, my mother was still living and I didn't even buy a present for her! Now a young man like me should know better than that. But I will not go back and do it over again. Yes, I sure had a lesson from that kind of life.

Well, I stayed home that fall and fell in love with another girl. She was quite young but she was sure a pretty girl. But I didn't know that she had a boy friend. I told her to keep away from him but she didn't listen to me. So I was twenty-three years old when I started waiting again for my old girl friend. I heard that she went to Fairbanks after I left there.

Well, in springtime I went to Kotzebue again. This time I started working for A. R. Ferguson. I was working on the boat as a deck hand and was getting \$175.00 a month. I was doing fine when they were boating around Kotzebue Sound, but on September 24, we took off from Kotzebue for Cape Lisburne and stayed up there for ten days but didn't land because the wind was too strong and so we went back to Kotzebue. When we got to Kotzebue there was a barge for us to take to Seattle. I thought that now I was going to have my fun and a trip to the States, but it was upside down fun. Yes sir, I was boating clear down to Adak Island but I was hungry

most of the time. Sometimes we had beans for breakfast, lunch, and supper. I have been working all my life, but I never got hungry on the job. This time I got so hungry that I even ate a raw potato. So, when we got to Seward, I jumped ship and took off to Anchorage again. I got a job on the Alaska Railroad in January, 1953.

While I was working I got a letter from my sister that my girl friend was home again. I couldn't believe it for awhile so I sent her a Valentine card to see what she would say. Well, there was no answer. So I worked until the middle part of March and took off for Nome. I was very anxious to get home but I had trouble in Nome. The taxi I was riding in got into an accident and I wound up in the hospital for almost two weeks. So finally I got out of the hospital and took off again for Point Hope and got there on the 9th of April.

When I got off the plane, I looked all around for my old flame but I didn't see her at all. I was wondering what happened to her. Well, I visited my friends and I finally saw her but we didn't say a thing to each other. I think we were both bashful. The next night they had a dance so I danced with her and I was plenty nervous. I kept my eyes on her every day.

Then it was time to hunt whales and there are usually eight people in one whaling crew and a cook makes nine.<sup>1</sup> My girl was the cook in the same crew that I was in so now I had a chance to talk to her. When night came around we had a tent, and a stove burning to keep us warm. Finally everybody went to sleep and I went over to her and we started talking. Sure enough, she had been waiting for me to say something. We planned to get married the same summer. Finally it was May and we got together but we weren't married yet as we were waiting for a license. Yes, I think I got what I wanted when I waited for my girl. It was June 11, 1953 when we were married.

Yes I thought I was ready for living but I wasn't. We didn't have a thing in the house when we first got married. All we had was a bucket, two or three cups, and a set of silverware. I was getting \$60.00 every two weeks and my wife \$60.00 a month from unemployment compensation and every time we got a cheque, we bought some dishes and food. Then I began to find out how hard it is to make a living for my own family. But at least we had our own house.<sup>2</sup> It had been my parents' house, but my mother was living with my sister.

Finally we had a baby on February 4, 1954. Yes, we had a son and his name is Henry James K. Yes, it sure was fun to have a sonny boy. I

<sup>1</sup>The writer is referring to the whale hunting crews, to one of which every adult male in the village belongs.

<sup>2</sup>Although matri- or patrilocal residence is an economic necessity for most of the young married couples at Point Hope, neolocal residence is the ideal. Every young couple wants a house of their own and sometimes they are provided with one long before it would be economically possible for them to buy or build by the death of parents. Since the writer was the only male child, he automatically received the family house when his sisters married and his mother went to live with one of them.



hardly did anything after we had that baby. All I could do was stay in and watch that baby for almost two weeks. I just couldn't believe it. Yes, it's hard to be a father when you have to keep your family warm and feed them too, but I don't mind at all.

Yes, I was doing fine until I went up to Barrow in the spring of 1955, but I came home in October because my mother had gone to the hospital. But the same day I got back, the doctor sent us notice that my mother was gone for good. Now I have no mother and no father. Yes, it is hard to make a living, but worse to go without parents. It is easy to find food and fuel but hard to find parents after they have passed away.

I'm willing to make a good clean living but I'm not able to work right now because I had an operation not very long ago. But when I get well, I want to help my friends and neighbours because they are helping me now. I'm getting better every day and I will help my friends as soon as I am able to work.<sup>1</sup>

Not very long ago I had another son. He was born on November 16, 1955. Now I have two kids of my own and one lovely little girl that we adopted. She is four years old and I love her a lot. Yes, it is a lot of fun to be married. Once in a while we get hard up on our groceries but we always get by somehow.

I think this is it. I haven't done anything today, but now I am signing off until I don't know when.

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<sup>1</sup>The writer worked away from the village for longer periods of time than most young men. His experiences show the wide variety of employment possibilities open to villagers and which are taken advantage of by those young men with a good command of English and without close family obligations. Men with families prefer to work away from the village only during the summer months. It is significant that L. K., now that he has a family to support, never leaves the village to work except during the summer. If he wishes to continue living in the village, and nearly all Point Hope families do, he must hunt during most of the year as the income he earns during the summer is not enough to support his family for the rest of the year.