



# Eskimo Hunters of the Bering Sea

By BRAD REYNOLDS Photographs by DON DOLL

Hot tea on an ice floe breaks the chill of early April on the Bering Sea. Out since dawn in the snow, Yupik Eskimos from the west coast of Alaska hunt seals to feed their families. Though modern in their methods, they are traditionalists at heart, living on the edge of a continent, of a culture, of survival.

**A**BOVE THE ROAR of the motor I heard a voice singing: "Kansas City, Kansas City, here I come." I looked over my shoulder and saw Joe Asuluk grinning in spite of the wind-whipped rain slashing his face. Obviously enjoying himself bucking the high swells, he burst into song again. But our destination was a long way from Kansas City. We were in a 22-foot open boat in the Bering Sea, heading, as best I could tell, toward the Soviet Union to hunt geese.

"You're sure there's land ahead?" I yelled back. He kept grinning as another wave washed aboard.

Joe's boat was a sturdy new Starcraft, powered by an 85-horsepower outboard. And while we sliced through most whitecaps at a fairly smooth angle, time and again we hit one dead on, cascading spray to either side, over the bow, and into the boat. If you didn't bend your head in time, you caught a faceful of salt water.

We were drenched, as well as our guns, but Joe kept singing and steering toward the horizon, where he promised flocks of geese beyond counting.

## He knows that his village must hunt and fish to survive.

Joe is both the policeman in Toksook Bay and the cook for its grade school. But in spite of the fact that he earns a salary, he knows that his village must hunt and fish to survive. He hoped to return with a good harvest of geese to share among his people. I wondered if we would return at all.

I had been living in Toksook Bay off and on for more than a year with another Jesuit, Don Doll, making photographs and learning about life in a Yupik Eskimo village. A short visit nine years earlier made me want to spend more time in this remote settlement where 370 people are still dependent upon a

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subsistence life-style and relatively isolated from outside cultural influences. In an open boat on the stormy Bering Sea, I was beginning to think maybe I had seen enough.

Toksook Bay is a new village perched on the edge of Nelson Island, Alaska, about 150 miles south of the mouth of the Yukon River. Fronting on a bay that opens onto the Bering Sea, the village is surrounded on three sides by low rolling hills and tundra. Not a tree grows on the island. In fact, there is not a tree for more than a hundred miles.

Families from Nightmute, a village inland on Nelson Island, began moving to the site in 1964 to be closer to their summer fishing camp. Some floated their houses across the bay on oil drums lashed together. Others, when winter came, pulled them over the ice on sleds behind dog teams.

John Charlie moved his family from Nightmute to the fledgling settlement that first winter. It took 30 dogs nine hours to drag his house across the ice. John told me about the move and his reason for it with lots of hand signs and the little English he has learned from his own children and the Roman Catholic priest. "From Nightmute to Umkumiut fishing village, too far. Too much gas. Lots and lots of gas."

Most dwellings in the village are three or four rooms, set in haphazard rows along dirt streets and nuzzled by snowmobiles and parts of snowmobiles. Surrounding the homes stand fish houses, where dried fish and sealskin bags of seal oil are stored along with nets, floats, and other equipment. In squat wooden bathhouses the villagers take excruciatingly hot steam baths, and there the elders discuss community affairs. Nearby spread wooden racks for drying salmon, herring, and whitefish.

The village enjoys the unusual luxuries of running water and indoor plumbing. Streets have lights, electricity is available for every house, and telephones have been installed. Not that these modern conveniences come without drawbacks and frustrations. Electricity, provided by AVEC (Alaska Village Electric Cooperative), costs 48 cents per kilowatt-hour. The state pays half, but the villagers' rates are still five times those of Washington, D. C., residents.

Joe Lincoln, local agent for Wien airlines, has racks of radio equipment, as well as two

telephones—one for business, the other for his family. "What good are these phones?" Joe remarked to me as he tried in vain to reach Bethel, 120 miles away. "You call for 30 minutes, and they are busy. Then you call, and they don't answer."

The economics of hunting for food is also a concern. In the ice-free summer villagers take out their motorboats to net herring and salmon. In fall and then in early spring, after the ice breaks up, they use them to hunt seals, ducks, and geese. In winter they chase across the frozen tundra and the bay on snowmobiles to hunt and trap foxes and mink. Snowmobiles and outboard motors are expensive. And gasoline here sells for \$2.40 a gallon.

There are only two ways to get gasoline, heating oil, and supplies into the village; both are costly. After the spring breakup, two or three barges chug into the bay, pump gas and oil into tanks on the edge of the village, and unload supplies ordered months earlier, littering the beach with piles of lumber, a new boat or snowmobile, and boxes of canned foods for use at the grade school.

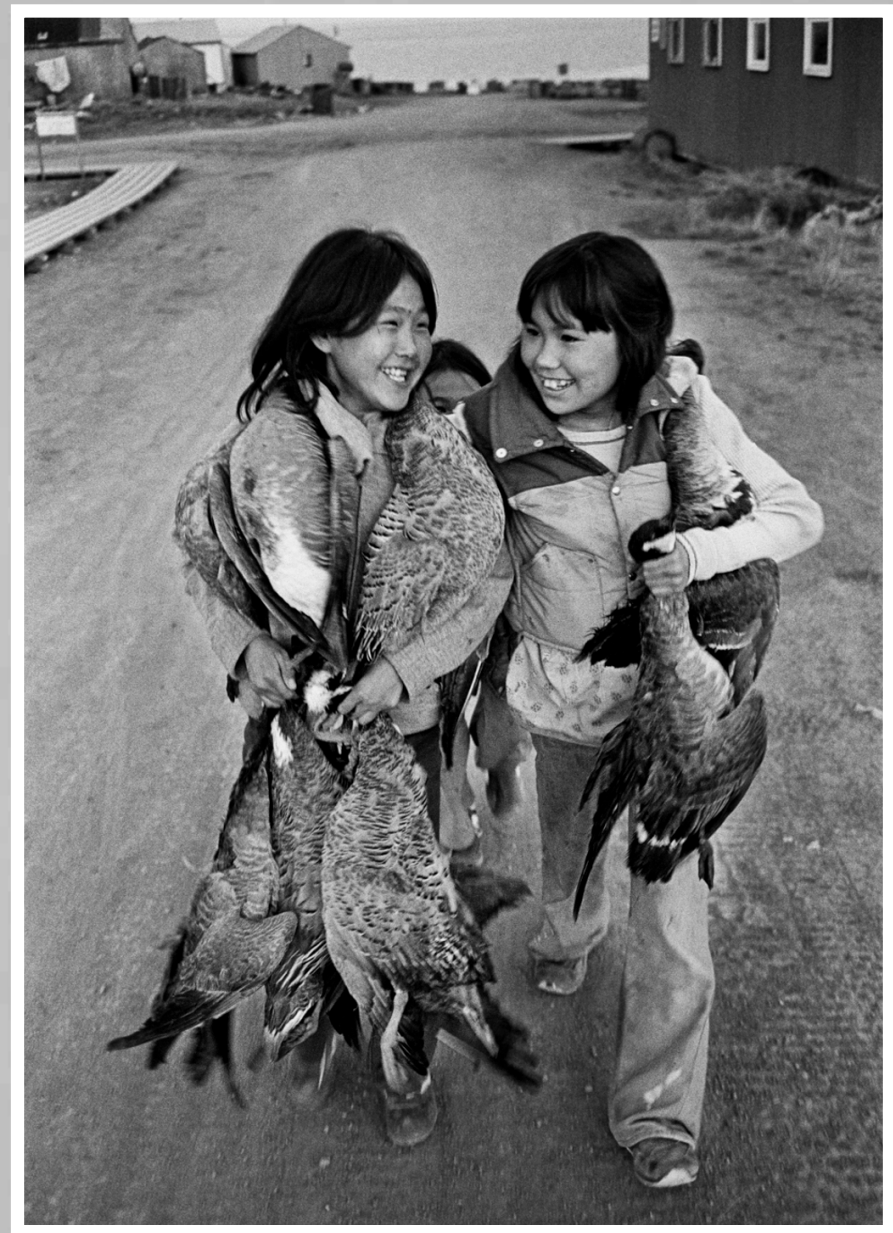
Most goods are flown in from Anchorage aboard the Twin Otters that land on the dirt airstrip daily during good weather. The planes carry mail, passengers, and groceries for Larry John's and David Jimmy's small stores. But air delivery is reflected in the prices. A half gallon of ice cream costs \$6; a three-pound box of laundry soap, close to \$4; a box of disposable diapers, \$15.50. I was amused to find salmon for sale—a 15-ounce can for \$3.79.

Salmon is a village mainstay, both for subsistence and income. In May about a dozen men leave their families to journey some 200 miles southeast to Bristol Bay, where the salmon industry is big business. Signing on with the fisheries at Clarks Point, they use their own or company boats to net the kings, reds, silvers, and pinks that swirl into the bay en route to their spawning rivers. On a good day a boat can haul in 15,000 pounds of fish. The cannery gets 15 percent of the catch in payment for its boat.

In a few short weeks the families who fish earn their income for the year, anywhere from \$3,000 to \$60,000, depending on the catch, whose boat it is, and how many family members work (Continued on page 822)



*Left to themselves by the rest of the state, scores of Yupik Eskimo communities dot the coast of the Bering Sea and the broad, marshy deltas of the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. Toksook Bay (population 370) was established on 40-mile-long Nelson Island in 1964, when families from the village of Nightmute moved closer to fishing grounds. The nearby Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge shelters half a million wildfowl each summer.*



To share their good fortune, Anna Asuluk (above, left), Darlene Morgan, right, and shy Lucy Asuluk, middle, carry emperor geese shot by Anna's father to friends and neighbors. These birds will probably end up in a delicious goose soup. Dividing with others is a Yupik tradition in the delta region, where four-fifths of the world's emperor geese nest.

A well-stocked gun rack (left) hangs in the living room of Paul John, a former mayor, whose daughter Agatha plays with his grandson Vernon. Men hunt ducks, geese, and ptarmigan in spring and summer, and seals year-round. In winter they trap foxes, mink, and hare for their pelts. Staple foods, however, are salmon and herring netted in summer and dried for winter.



*They don't close school just because of snow in Toksook Bay. So on this blustery February morning—with the temperature dropping to minus 10° F—two young girls set off for the grade school down the main street of town. Strong Bering Sea winds like these whistle across the island much of the time, occasionally reaching*

*70 miles an hour. If there were a serious storm, parents would escort their children to school or drive them in snowmobiles. There was one stormy morning a few years ago, however, when the principal of the high school couldn't even find the building. That day he called off school.*

together. Toksook Bay offers few paying jobs, so Bristol Bay money is important.

Subsistence fishing for salmon around Toksook Bay is also serious business. One afternoon I went out with Joe Asuluk, my companion on the Bering Sea goose hunt, to haul in his net from a nearby river. As we headed upstream, I could see the silver flash of fish below us. We began at one end of the net, tugging and lifting it, pulling the boat along, and untangling the salmon's gills from the mesh. As fish piled higher in the boat, Joe explained the science of subsistence fishing to me. "The woman knows. She tells you when you have enough."

Until then, the men haul in salmon, which the women fillet along the bone and hang over the racks to dry. Once dry, the fish are stored in baskets or boxes until needed.

When salmon or herring are running, Toksook Bay is a busy place, families working together, each member at his or her traditional task, laying in food for winter. Father and son handle the nets while mother and daughter clean the catch. Villagers often set up camp close to a favorite fishing site. With boats of families leaving and returning daily, the pink flesh of drying salmon, the silver of herring on the racks, the barking dogs and playing children, the village takes on a festive air.

Yet hazards are always present. Villagers tell of times when they dragged the bay, searching for the body of a fisherman who fell overboard in heavy seas. Elders remind youngsters how to save themselves in winter storms by burrowing in the snow.

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## Where the livelihood of everyone depends so much upon the role of each . . .

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Families are strong in Toksook Bay. Where the livelihood of everyone depends so much upon the role of each, the members of a family form solid and lasting bonds. Rarely does anyone move away from family and village. Only about a dozen students have left to attend the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. Until recently, no one had stayed the full four years. The strange city environment, language problems, and

homesickness make for slow and often discouraging progress.

Respect for authority in the village runs deep. In their Yupik language the same word means both listen and obey. When children listen to their parents, they obey them. Parents do not argue in front of children, nor do they physically punish them. Instead they prefer to talk with a child until he realizes his behavior is wrong.

But when parents drink, they forget their gentle ways. The villagers are alert to the problems of alcoholism. Like most other villages in the region, Toksook Bay prohibits alcohol. But those who want to drink know where to find bootlegged liquor and home-brewed beer.

In a village 100 percent Catholic, divorce is almost unheard of. People take their religion seriously and do not relegate it merely to Sunday morning. Nick Therchik and Bruno Chakuchin are deacons in the church and direct prayers and Communion services when Father Dick Case, their priest, is off to one of the two other villages that he serves. At least once a year the people of Toksook Bay sponsor a religious rally—a weekend revival when Eskimos from surrounding villages come to share songs, spiritual talks, and prayer.

Village children are expected to pull their own weight and to contribute as much as possible to the family's welfare. When a boy shoots his first seal, his mother will host a seal party, dividing the meat and blubber among the other village women and giving out prizes of seal oil, rice, sugar, cloth, and toilet paper. When a party is announced, guests gather outside the door and the mother of the young hunter distributes the gifts, tossing armfuls of them up in the air. Laughing, the women will scramble like children to catch them.

Mark John was taught to fish and hunt by his father, Paul. When Paul served as mayor, he left the hunt for food up to his sons. Mark, unmarried in his late 20s, is still responsible to his family.

"Our family is like a chain," Mark explained. "When you are unmarried, you are inside the chain and you contribute to it. Last year I made good money fishing. I gave it to Dad. He gives me enough to live on and a bit more, since I'm oldest. I've saved

enough to fly to Anchorage and to visit friends in other villages. When you marry, it's different. You begin your own chain."

Yupik, one of the two basic Eskimo languages in Alaska, is the common tongue of the village's 65 families, although all but the very old and the very young speak some English. Children learn English in the grade school. Wilma Moore, its principal, explained to me that in other villages the first three grades are often taught in Yupik, but in Toksook Bay the parents want the children to get English right from the start. By the time they reach high school, they are almost as comfortable with English as with their own language.

In 1976 a two-million-dollar high school was built in the village. Students no longer have to travel to St. Marys, the boarding school 125 miles north in the Yukon Valley, or even farther to the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. Nelson Island High School teaches English, math, and science, as well as home economics, typing, and shop. In addition, traditional crafts and dancing are offered.

At first glance the boys, dressed in T-shirts, blue jeans, and tennis shoes, could belong in the classroom of any American high school. But the girls wear long earrings of carved walrus ivory and parkas with heavy wolverine and white fox ruffs. And a line of snowmobiles replaces the parking lot full of cars.

The boys hunt and fish, the girls help their mothers around the house, take care of younger siblings, and in summer gather berries and other foods. Other than that, there is not much for teenagers to do. There are sports, of course, at the high school during the school year. In fact, during the long, dark winter the school gym is a center for recreation for adults as well as youths. Toksook Bay plays basketball tournaments with other high schools, and men form teams to challenge nearby villages. For the boys there are also traditional sports, enthusiastically played at local youth olympics.

Once a year the high school sponsors a carnival, with cakewalks, darts—even a mock jail (the mayor, village councillors, and the priest are its most popular prisoners!). In the late spring the students decorate the gym with streamers of crepe paper,

bright stars, and a poster proclaiming "We may never pass this way again." They elect a king and queen, who dance the royal dance wearing their crowns—just as in any other high school on prom night.

The village council voted to allow two dances a month in the community hall, and they're well attended, with taped music by the Bee Gees and Kiss blasting through the darkened room. The night may end with a couple walking hand in hand past the edge of town and down the dirt airstrip—always keeping one ear tuned for the siren that blows every night at eleven o'clock, signaling a curfew for anyone of high-school age or younger. Before the siren was installed, the church bell rang the curfew.

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## Still, he dreams of moving to Fairbanks . . .

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When Gabriel Chagluak graduated from the high school, he was lucky enough to get one of the few jobs open to a young person—as a teacher's aide in the grade school. Still, he dreams of moving to Fairbanks, to attend the University of Alaska, see stores, and learn to drive a car. "Then I would learn all the streets around and drive to Florida."

But Gabriel's father is in poor health and unable to do the hunting and fishing the family depends on, so Gabe and his brothers remain in the village to care for the family.

Eva Nevak is another Toksook Bay high-school graduate. She has probably traveled farther from the village than anyone else her age, having visited friends in the southwestern states. One summer she spent two months in Bremerton, Washington, with Tom and Leslie Dolan, former teachers at the high school in Toksook.

I saw Eva in Bremerton during the baptism of the Dolan's twin baby boys. She has a winning smile, made even more so by dimples. Wearing a soft, flattering dress and a borrowed pair of high heels, she looked at home with other guests. But she spoke wistfully of her mother's weekly phone calls, when they could speak in Yupik together. She talked of going back to the village, where there are not so many people always in a rush to go somewhere, no cars, no frightening traffic (Continued on page 828)



Through the small, bright screen the world comes to Toksook Bay. After a television tower at Nightmute blew down a few years ago, videocassettes became a prime way for villagers to get impressions of life in the rest of the country. Storekeeper Larry John was first to buy a cassette player—his library now holds 140

movies—but at least 20 families soon followed suit. In the living room behind John's store (above) Simeon Julius, left, and John Alirkar spend a few moments watching cartoons with neighbor children. Reception from Nome and Bethel has since resumed, but TV still takes a backseat to bingo as the town's favorite pastime.



A toothy smile brightens the face of Fritzie Nevah (facing page), who holds walrus ivory that his father, George, will carve into earrings, bracelets, or links for wristwatch bands. His work has been shown in a touring exhibit of native crafts sponsored by the Alaska Council on the Arts. Nick and Laura Therchik (above) wear the handiwork of Laura's sewing. Their mountain-squirrel parkas kept them warm on this chill morning in the Roman Catholic church, where, with the heater broken, it was so cold that the holy water froze.

Fingers make the difference for Nancy Chanar (right) as she tests her skills on a computer programmed for first-grade math. At her age children also start English lessons at school. Most families in Tohtsook Bay speak Yupik at home and on the street, though all but a few old-timers know some English.



or noises, and where the air is clean. It was then I realized that the life of the youngsters in Toksook Bay was slow and sedentary in my mind, but not necessarily in theirs.

"B-14 . . . I-23 . . . N-47." The numbers on the bingo board light up as a village woman calls the numbers for the players filling the community hall, the other center of village activity. Bingo, played two days a week, is the village's only regularly scheduled social event. Sitting cross-legged with a bag of markers close at hand, players spread their cards in tidy rows on the floor. Most keep a soft-drink can handy for spitting. Men, women, and children—practically the entire village—dip snuff. The children begin as early as two. It is a common sight to spot preschoolers toddling around the players, the telltale worn circle of the snoose can in their back pockets.

Movies are occasionally shown in the community hall, projected against a white wall at one end of the meeting room. The films, ordered from a distributor in Anchorage that specializes in servicing villages, are all family fare, so everyone is welcome.

Soon after the showing is announced, families begin filing toward the hall. The children crowd up front on the floor, squirming, laughing, sharing candy and soda with one another. Their parents sit on the floor behind them; the older ones are given folding chairs. All the way to the back cluster the teenagers.

The film starts, the noise dies down. The Eskimos are an appreciative audience, laughing and applauding as the scenes unfold. During scary scenes, like the evil witch creeping toward Sleeping Beauty's house, the smaller children cover their ears in terror. Even if there is no loud noise, they cover their ears but never their eyes.

While watching a very popular film about the Vienna Boys' Choir, I could not understand the uproarious laughter at scenes that did not strike me at all funny—until I realized that each of those scenes included a boy with freckles and curly, bright red hair, characteristics unknown in a village of brown skin and straight black hair.

Movies are always a big draw. But an even bigger event took place when the entire village gathered to celebrate a wedding. At the reception we feasted on seal, mink,

and *akutaq*. Akutaq—Eskimo ice cream—is made of berries and shredded salmon whipped in seal oil, a delicacy that is definitely an acquired taste. After the meal the groom stayed for the showing of Walt Disney's *The Littlest Horse Thieves*, while the bride went off to visit with friends.

Toksook Bay now has television reception, although videotapes remain popular. Nearly half the families have videotape machines, and they trade shows back and forth. The youngsters love cartoons, and the older children, kung fu movies. The adults watch them all, from *Towering Inferno* to *Every Which Way But Loose*. Before TV, news came mainly through the two radio stations that can usually be tuned in from Nome and Bethel. Newspapers and magazines arrive regularly at the high school, but I saw only one family in the village with a subscription to the *Times* from Anchorage.

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### Villagers are well aware that the outside world is changing their lives.

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Toksook Bay may not be reading the news, but the villagers are well aware that the outside world is changing their lives. First came the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act—and then the prospect of Bering Sea oil discoveries. Both stimulated village-wide discussion. It seemed when we were not in the community hall for bingo or a movie, it was for another meeting.

The settlement act of 1971, in attempting a just distribution of land and money to Alaska's natives, has wrenched them into the hard realities of 20th-century economics and politics. Suddenly a village without television or cars was joined with similar villages into a multimillion-dollar corporation.

Alaska's Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts were given 44 million acres of land, a little more than ten percent of the state's total acreage. They were also awarded 962.5 million dollars for claims on the rest of the land. The federal government organized the native population under 13 regional corporations to distribute funds to the 200 eligible villages. These also formed corporations, with the villagers as shareholders.

The Eskimos of Toksook Bay each own one hundred shares in Calista, the regional corporation, and equal shares in the village corporation, Nunakauiak Yupik.

The Calista Corporation, second largest of the regional corporations in size of landholdings, number of shareholders, and total assets, has investments in Alaska, including the luxury-class Sheraton Hotel in downtown Anchorage. After several years of multimillion-dollar losses, the corporation turned its finances around, making a profit and paying dividends to shareholders for the first time in 1982.

While relatively little money has as yet filtered down to the individual, the Eskimos spend a great deal of time and energy discussing everything from offshore oil drilling to the dangers of snowmobiles speeding through town. Meetings are usually bilingual, for the benefit of the whites who fly in to counsel and inform.

In 1979 the federal government informed villages in the region it would accept bids for leasing drilling rights to companies interested in exploring for oil in the Bering Sea. As part of the coastal-zone management program, a board to represent local interests was elected from the villages in the Yukon Delta region.

In January 1981 chartered planes from the distant villages landed on the Toksook airstrip, while snowmobiles from the nearby villages roared into town. The board was meeting here with representatives from Nunam Kitlutsisti (Protectors of the Land), a group from Bethel advocating the subsistence life-style for Eskimos.

The group's director, Harold Sparck, told the meeting, "Keeping New York City lit and operating the air conditioners in Los Angeles is the reason for these leases."

Few, if any, of those attending had been to New York or Los Angeles, and with a wind howling across the snow-swept tundra, it was difficult to connect Toksook Bay to those distant, foreign places.

As he talked, Harold flashed slides of oil rigs, tankers, and acres of stacked pipe. "The land, the water, and the air are never the same again," he asserted. "Oilmen make noise and spill things into the water. Even when they try to be careful, they are going to change things."

One of the representatives from Mekoryuk quoted from a newspaper article on oil prospects in the Bering Sea, translating it effortlessly into Yupik. He feared that the oil companies would want to build a deepwater base on his island, Nunivak.

Although the first exploration drilling will be to the north of here, Eskimos in the Toksook area believe that their subsistence livelihood may eventually be upset by environmental damage.

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### Will the oil companies listen to his people's problems and honor their promises? an Eskimo asked.

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As the meeting progressed, the Eskimos began to realize the inevitable—that more people will be coming into their area, whether or not they want them, that the oil companies' interests in the resources under the water conflict with their own interests in the resources within the water. And while they might not understand all the complexities involved, they feel the pressures.

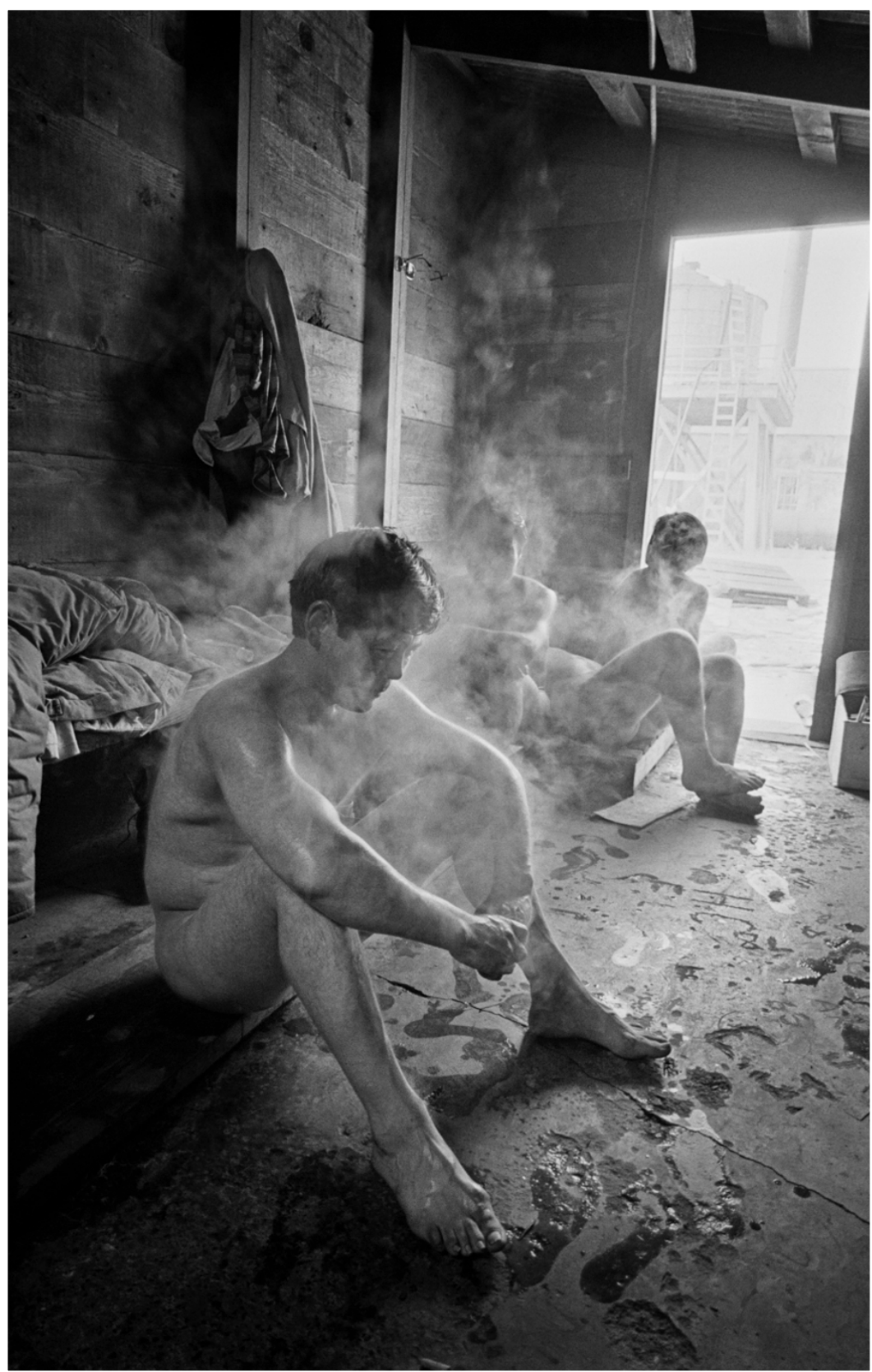
Will the oil companies listen to his people's problems and honor their promises? an Eskimo asked.

Harold replied, "If you're strong enough—and have a shotgun in your hand." After listening for hours, Mayor Paul John rose to express the feelings of many there: "The oil people do not care about fish, the seals, and the birds. They will come for oil to make money so they can eat their kinds of food. They eat through money."

Attentive to the needs and concerns of his village, Paul worries over many changes he sees, such as the village youth turning away from a subsistence life-style. "This is because they have gone out to college and the cities," he says, "living with *kassaqs* [whites]. Unless they relearn to eat the fish foods, some of the young may starve." Recalling a time before canned fruit and packaged cookies, Paul continues to rely upon what the land provides, all the while warning that the store-bought foodstuffs may someday disappear.

Paul John and (Continued on page 834)





*"Eyes and ears of the north," young men like Jimmy Alaginar (above, left) and Ralph John serve proudly in the National Guard, which also earns them extra money in a cash-poor society. Many families rely on income from commercial salmon fishing in*

*Bristol Bay to supplement a subsistence living. Workers there earn a year's pay in a few weeks each summer. Nick Chanar (left) and fellow crewmen relax at Clarks Point after a day on the water. Steam bathing is a traditional and sociable way to keep clean.*



*To turn his house into a boat, Ben Chagluak loaded it onto 55-gallon drums and towed it from the old fishing camp at Umlumiut to Toksook. His father and fellow founders of the town did much the same thing 20 years ago when they moved across Nelson Island from Nightmute; other residents waited until winter*

*to drag their one-room dwellings over the ice with dog teams. Government-built housing later doubled the number of homes sheltering the village's 65 families. A determination to make their lives better prompted their first move. It still contributes to the success of Toksook Bay.*

the other elders worry that their children are losing hold of the Eskimo traditions. They sound that warning regularly at their meetings. "Losing our culture." The phrase also kept arising like a refrain at a meeting of the youth organization. Said one girl: "Losing our culture, our roots, is like weakening us. What will our kids have to look back on? Will they know where they came from?"

But little of that meeting dealt with the old ways. Instead, they planned their next dance, discussed speed limits for snowmobiles in the village, and talked about opening a snack bar. "So we can get money to go where we want to go," as one high-school boy put it. "Or get what we want to get." He smiled. "Like planes."

Simeon, Paul John's second son, is married and raising a family. He continues subsistence hunting and fishing, but he also

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"Our folks expect us to live like them. . . . Sometimes they don't understand us."

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teaches in the Headstart program. He says: "Our folks expect us to live like them. They had to cut firewood—we were raised with stove oil. My dad lived in an old mud dug-out. Sometimes they don't understand us."

A month after the meeting on oil leases, villagers gathered in the hall to talk with representatives from Alaska's Department of Fish and Game. Introduced from a nearby island two decades ago, Nelson Island's musk-ox herd had outgrown the food supply and needed to be thinned by some 20 cows. But who would hunt them?

Ed Shavings, an Eskimo guide from Nunivak, was flown in to tell the men of Toksook Bay how they thin the herd on his island. He said that big money could be made from the game hunters, who arrive from the world over for an opportunity to shoot a musk-ox. Not that there's all that much suspense to the hunt. When cornered, a herd backs together into a defensive huddle, immobile and helpless against guns.

But since only a few were to be killed that year, the hunters would be chosen by lot. Permits for Alaskan residents run \$25. For out-of-state hunters, a thousand dollars.

On Nunivak, sportsmen pay another \$3,000 to \$5,000 for a guide, use of a snowmobile, food, and a night's lodging in the guide's home, since there are no hotels. The sportsmen take only the head and hide of the animal, leaving the meat for the village. So, in addition to the money, Nunivak residents still get the food.

"Sometimes they're so happy with the trophy that they tip you \$200, \$400. Those businessmen!" said Ed Shavings wonderingly.

But the attitude on Nelson Island is different. Bob Pegau of the Department of Fish and Game tells me: "Here the people are much more possessive about their animals. They're not so open to outsiders as the people on Nunivak."

To make as sure as possible that the animals will be hunted by Nelson Island people, the elders decide that every villager should put in his name, stacking the odds against an outsider being chosen.

The February morning of the drawing is 15°F below zero. Even if anyone from the outside wanted to be there, planes cannot land because of the strong, gusting winds, which send the chill factor plummeting to minus 65°F. At 8 a.m. it is still as dark as night, but I see huddled figures, bent double against the wind, moving toward the community hall. There is trouble getting its oil heater working, and people keep their parkas on. Men bring their wives, and children on their way to school drop by to write out their names and drop them into a five-gallon paint can.

Then, everyone turns to me—the villagers have agreed among themselves that I am impartial enough to draw out the names. One by one I pull out 20 slips. The names are all from Toksook Bay and nearby villages. To the disgust of the hunters, they include eight high-school youths and two grade-school girls. The rest, though, are men.

After the Fish and Game representatives have issued permits, Paul John stands for attention. In Yupik he announces that the village leaders have decided that the musk-oxen will be shared equally among all the people, as are the first salmon, seals, and other game brought into the village.

There is no discussion. In Toksook Bay the old ways still come first. □