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the summer on Bylot
Island.



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The Floc-edge

Late May is a lovely time of the year in the north of Baffin Island. The sun has been continuously above the horizon for some weeks. The spring thaw has not yet begun and there is a feeling of warmth and expectancy in the air. The nights, due to the refraction from the large expanse of snow, are nearly as bright as day. They have a peculiar soft colouring - a rather subdued yellow glow. Nighttime in May is the time of long shadows.

Within two days of my arrival at Pond Inlet, I set off for Cape Graham Moore - some fifty miles distant. There was a sea-bird colony near Cape Graham Moore which I wanted to visit although it was quite early in the year. Mainly, I wanted to break myself in for the long trip next week to Cape Hay. As my "trail clothes" were not yet ready, I borrowed duffle socks, a pair of matik (skin boots) and a huge pair of duffle pants from Corporal Johnson. Mucktar had his team of dogs tackled and was standing by even before I had struggled into the unfamiliar clothing.

After days of waiting and hours of sitting idly in a chilly DC3, I would have enjoyed almost any form of activity. But the trip to Cape Graham Moore was most exciting. At first Mucktar was rather quiet and shy. We had not yet got to know each other, and both my accent and pronunciation were undoubtedly strange to him.

The snow was firm and smooth and we clipped along at a little more than four miles an hour. The dogs had not been on the trail for several days and were bursting with suppressed energy. When I got chilly, which was surprising with all the clothing I was inside of, I jumped off the komatik and ran for a while. Usually the

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effort was too exhausting. Soon, I learned to lean back on the komatik and enjoy myself - forgetting the cold - because after all I would be here for a long, long time.

We left Pond Inlet at midnight and the trip to Button Point, where our camp would be set up, should take twelve hours. Large leads were already opening in the sea ice and although it was night the seals were sunning themselves along the edges. At first they were mere black specks in the distance. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish seals from the shadows cast by small hummocks of ice. My eyes, unlike Mucktar's, were not yet conditioned to the slight shading in the Arctic between the real thing and an illusion. I was always amazed that Mucktar could frequently see a seal in the distance which I could not distinguish even with binoculars.

We made long detours around many of the leads, as often they were too wide to cross. The dogs would see or smell the seals and rush forward at a tremendous speed of eight or nine miles an hour. In a twinkling the seals would disappear. Once in a while a single seal would be entranced to the very last minute by the oncoming commotion. Several times we nearly ran over such a bewildered individual. Those were "netserk" or ringed seals which remain here all the year round and on which the Eskimo depends for his food and much of his clothing.

If the lead were less than nine feet wide we crossed it. Mucktar drove the dogs at right angles to the lead and with a crack of his 25-foot whip hurried them across. Not all the dogs made it safely. Those in the rear fell or were pulled into the water and

forced to scramble out on the other side. The komatik was about ten feet in length and was built of strong oak with whalebone runners. Each piece, except the runners, was lashed on with seal-skin thongs. The Eskimo komatik can take a terrific strain on any part of it. There was often a brief moment while crossing those leads when either the front or the rear of the komatik was in the water while the dogs struggled for a toehold on the ice. I never could quite enjoy those moments, although I am assured they are the most exciting of ice travel.

Early in the morning we reached the high cliffs of Bylot Island and skirted the shore for the remainder of the trip. The first bird we saw was a raven. How strange it is that this conspicuous bird should remain all year round in the Arctic! It does not even possess the protection of feathered shanks as have the ptarmigan and snowy owls. Nevertheless it must be especially equipped in some manner to withstand extreme cold. For instance, the temperature at Pond Inlet had dropped to 50 degrees below for a while in February. While we were still half a mile away the raven had sighted us and departed with loud hoarse croaks. What the raven lacks in protective colouration it makes up for by being especially wary. It does not depend on any special kind of food. Dead animals, trapped foxes and the leavings of bears comprise its food in winter. It is the scavenger of the northlands and there are always leavings of one kind or another to provide a meal. Because of its hardiness or perhaps in spite of it, the raven is the first bird to nest in the Arctic. Lemmings washed out of their homes by the spring thaw, and the occasional egg of other birds, provide the

extra food it requires to feed its offspring.

Early that morning we saw our first Snow Geese. A group of four, silhouetted against the cliffs, honked as they passed by and disappeared abruptly over a glacier. The presence of snow geese was almost a certain indication that warm weather was creeping upwards from the south. The only other birds we saw near land were male snow buntings. According to Mucktar, some of them had returned with the sun. Food was hard to come by even on the exposed ridges. The buntings were absurdly tame as they investigated every tiny crevice for hidden seeds.

Mucktar whipped the dogs to a prone position, dug into the "grub box", produced a primus and began to melt snow for tea. It was very cold standing still, so he made a snow wall for protection against the wind. Using a "panar" or snow-knife, he quickly cut snow blocks from the hard-packed cover of sea ice. The primus was soon roaring and the scene was incredibly quiet and beautiful. There was not a human within thirty miles. Our voices echoed back from the tall cliffs of Bylot Island and unconsciously we spoke softly. Normally, there is no need to raise one's voice in the Arctic and perhaps this is why the Eskimo voice is so soft and musical. The soft murmuring of Eskimo voices in a nearby trupek is one of my happiest recollections of the Arctic.

We set up our tent on the ice at Button Point, had another cup of tea, and set out for the floe-edge, which was two miles away. We could reach Cape Graham Moore sooner by hugging the shore, but who would intentionally bypass the floe-edge, which is the beginning and end of the Arctic spring?

Perhaps not everyone knows how closely the life of the Eskimo in the eastern Canadian Arctic is tied to the sea. From it he obtains ninety five per cent of his needs. Without it he could not exist. We draw our maps outlining the contours of the land but the Eskimos at Pond Inlet draw theirs by outlining the edge of the sea. They know very little about the land but a great deal about the sea. The floe-edge for a short time each year brings the wealth of the sea to their feet.

There is a large expanse of permanently open water in Baffin Bay. In the days of early Arctic exploration it was known as the "North Waters" and at one time was thought to lead directly to the North Pole. Large numbers of walrus, narwhales, beluga (white whales) and seals spend the winter in this open space. Few people are familiar with the North Waters as treacherous piles of ice surround it and its borders change almost daily. As spring arrives, the packed ice gradually breaks up and drifts away. The floe-edge comes closed and closer to land. Due to the differences in temperatures between the main body of ice and the open sea, a constant circulation of waters is set up. Consequently, small marine life, amphipods and shrimps in particular, thrive at the floe-edge. And so walrus, beluga, seals, narwhales and sea-birds crowd close to this locality where their food is most abundant. Such a situation is comparable to the turbulence at the Grand Banks where the cold Labrador Current meets the warm Atlantic waters.

When we first arrived at the floe-edge at Button Point there was a great deal of loose ice on its fringes. Open patches of water extended for miles. We could hear narwhales grunting as they

surfaced far out, seals floated by on ice pangs and a small herd of walrus made a great commotion as they surfaced for a few moments. But it was the sea-birds which impressed me most.

Flying or resting in the open stretches of water and along the floe-edge were thousands of fulmars, glaucous gulls, kittiwakes, black guillemots and murre. They were crowding close to land not only because food was here at the floe-edge but soon they must come to land to nest and were slowly getting "conditioned" to a new way of life.

Several thousand king eiders were resting on the ice or in the calm open waters. The king eiders are the most Arctic of the eiders and the male nuptial plumage of orange, black, grey and white makes it one of the most colourful of all ducks. The females, which alone incubate the eggs and care for the young, are brownish and drab.

Before reaching the floe-edge I had been puzzled by a rather strange sound like a moan which rose and fell in intensity. It was the soft dove-like mating calls of the male king eiders. The males stood up in the water, slowly lowered their breasts and elevated their rears to show off two large white rump patches. Sometimes they lowered their bills on puffed out breasts and made curious gulping motions. When a female approached a male he would often raise his head vertically and slowly rotate until all sides of his glorious plumage had been presented to her view. The scene, although a glorious one, had its tragic side. The floe-edge was littered with dead or dying king eiders on which foxes and ravens were now feasting. Apparently some of them had been crushed by fast moving ice. Others doubtless had been caught by rapidly freezing water.

The world of the king eider, and of all Arctic birds, is one of continuous hazards.

The sea-bird colony at Cape Graham Moore was still in the prospecting stage: the birds were seeking out suitable places to nest, and gradually becoming accustomed once again to the land. Flocks of murrelets from the floe-edge - some ten miles away - flew alongside the cliffs and alighted for a minute or so. The stay on the cliffs would gradually lengthen each day until finally the birds would settle down for the summer to raise their young. We left Cape Graham Moore before the birds had settled in. It was now June 3 and I could not delay much longer setting out for Cape Hay.

Journey to Cape Hay (1)

June 5 was the warmest day of the year so far at Pond Inlet. Even with dark glasses I squinted against the glare - a glare which bounced off the white buildings of the Detachment with incredible brilliance. A more pleasant day could scarcely be imagined for the start of our journey to Cape Hay.

I was still a bit groggy after the recent hundred mile "break in" trip to Cape Graham Moore. Corporal Johnson had decided to accompany us as far as the Wollaston Islands and perhaps to Cape Hay itself. He was anxious to get started as this warm weather might precipitate a spring thaw. He got me out of bed after only four or five hours sleep by solemnly promising I could sleep all day on the morrow.

Our impending departure caused almost as much excitement as our arrival. All the packages so carefully stored away a few days ago were now brought out and scattered over the snow while it was decided which komatiks should take them. Drums of gasoline were dug from the snow and lashed firmly onto Ootoova's komatik. Mucktar was loading a 22-foot canoe and an outboard motor. Willing hands helped with all those things. My sole contribution was to decide what things I might need early on the trail and then stand back as more experienced hands lashed and tied, repacked or even discarded.

Our expedition was an impressive one. We had three teams and forty-five dogs. Ootoova was taking the gasoline and three months supply of food; Mucktar, his family, canoe and outboard on another team; Johnson, his helper Toonga, my equipment and I on the third. Our team was kept purposely light as one of our duties was to keep ahead of the others and hunt seals for dog food along the way.

It was late evening before we finally got away. Since we had 24 hours of daylight every day, we decided to do most of our travelling by "night", when snow and ice would be drier. There were last minute messages to my wife and the department to be sent out by the Hudson's Bay factor on his next radio sked with Clyde Inlet. Finally we had shaken hands all around and there was no reason for further delay. With a cracking of whips and the combined concert of howls from 45 dogs we set off across Eclipse Sound.

The trip across Eclipse Sound to the shore of Bylot Island was fairly smooth. There were no leads to cross or detour and few seals. Now that the sun was lower on the horizon it was colder. There were no hills to break the wind which swept up the Sound from Baffin Bay, and the snow eddied around the komatiks as we broke trail. Somewhat exhausted by the events of the past week, I wrapped a few caribou skins around me, lay back on the komatik and fell asleep. Eight hours later we had arrived at the Aktineq. Flocks of snow geese were flying around and I saw my first shore bird - a purple sandpiper which had never been recorded previously for Bylot Island. Truly an auspicious start.

The low-lying plains of the Aktineq merged with Eclipse Sound. Only the occasional bare ridge suggested that this was land and not sea. The valley of the Aktineq River - which later would be a raging torrent during the spring run-off - was now a mere depression similar to those of the snow ridges we had crossed in Eclipse Sound. Back of the plains rose the jagged black peaks of the central mountains. Flowing from their heights was the Sermilik Glacier with its dark lateral moraines of rock and scree. Both contrasted

formidably with the soft monotony of the plains.

Louis Lemieux had chosen the plains in the south-western section of Bylot Island as a base for his summer's study of snow geese. Louis had left Pond Inlet before us and when we arrived he was already in the process of setting up his camp. Louis, also, had a young Eskimo (Kaminerik) and his family for the summer. The two tents were placed side by side on the only bare plot of ground close to the shore. Our arrival with three additional teams created a great deal of confusion. With the prospect of a long summer ahead when he also would be largely alone, Louis stopped his work, invited us to remain the day and promptly began to prepare a meal.

Our Eskimos were delighted to renew acquaintance with Kaminerik although they must have parted mere hours ago. In a short time the dogs were fed and tied down, tents were set up and soft murmuring and laughter came from Kaminerik's tent where he was now entertaining guests also.

It was another warm day, and more and more geese arrived. With so little bare ground available we wondered where they could possibly get food. The plains inland were apparently even more heavily blanketed with snow. The geese milled around the bare patches of ground back of the camp and near the coast. Louis was getting more and more impressed with the wise choice he had made regarding the location of his summer's base.

We slept most of the day, but towards evening ~~was~~ ~~awakened~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~noise~~ of a dog fight a few feet from our sleeping bags woke us completely. Gradually we worked ourselves up to the point of departure. Tents

were taken down, komatiks reloaded, dogs tackled, and soon we were again ready for another night's travel. Louis took movies as we left in a commotion of shouts and tangled dogs. We called back bantering remarks about the softness of his summer's work in the "banana belt". There was no doubt that Cape Hay, a mere hundred miles distant, would be "more" Arctic.

All that night we followed the coast along the low-lying plains. Our daily schedule was now properly organized, and we took periodic side trips to hunt seals. When a seal was sighted either Johnson or Toonga dressed in a completely white parka and holding ahead of him a small canvas screen which obscured the face and rifle, crept slowly up to it. The seal sleeps intermittently. Every few minutes it raises its head and looks around. During those moments of alertness which the hunter must learn to forecast, he must remain motionless even if his foot is raised off the ice. The time of the day, of the year, the direction of the wind all have a bearing on such a stalking technique. The successful hunter develops his peculiar skill only by long hours of practice. We required about four seals each day to feed the dogs and ourselves. Each stalk might require an hour's delay - longer if the seals were especially wary on that day. So our job was a responsible one and taken seriously. Needless to say I was pretty much excess baggage during most of the hunting. I could not even learn to control the dogs.

The dogs are compelled to lie down while the stalking for seals is carried out. A well trained team lies quietly and promptly. Individually, I expect the teams would have behaved properly. But when one or both of the other teams were near us, there appeared to be a great competition as to which would reach the carcass first.

As soon as the hunter sets himself in the prone position usually necessary for shooting, the dogs are instantly alert and tensed to bolt. With the first puff of smoke and before the report of the rifle reaches them they are away in a mad rush. Sometimes I would be off the komatik when the dogs started off and would be left behind. On other occasions the quick jolt threw me off. Eventually, I learned to watch the dogs' ears and not the hunter at the critical moment, and would have sufficient warning to attach myself firmly.

The Eskimo does not stop for tea on the least excuse as some writers insist. Every three hours or so, the team must halt and the traces be straightened out. In the eastern Canadian Arctic the dogs are tackled fanwise with individual long seal-skin thongs. On level ice and with a fresh team this method is very effective. But individual dogs lag behind, one of the team is invariably the "fall guy" for that particular day and must be nipped by every dog at every opportunity; and rough ice occasionally forces the dogs to pack together. So the traces are constantly being crossed and getting tangled. The Eskimo uses his long whip more to keep the dogs taut on their leashes than to burry them along. A good team hauls smoothly at an even rate of speed dependant on snow conditions. Nevertheless the traces get more and more tangled, the efficiency of the team is slowed down and they must be halted and the traces straightened out again. This halt is a good occasion to make tea. The full meal comes only at the end of the day's travel, when camp is set up for the night and the dogs are fed.

On the third night we reached Canada Point at the entrance to Navy Board Inlet. Here in 1906, Capt. Bernier in his first Canadian Government Expedition took possession of Bylot Island. We

found his stone marker and took photographs.

We now began to see more and more birds. Small groups of glaucous gulls and ^{the} rarer Thayer's gulls (an Arctic race of herring gull) flew high towards open water ahead which we could not see. Occasionally we startled ravens which were feeding on the leavings of a polar bear's kill. Geese were most plentiful. As they passed over our heads they honked - perhaps in greeting, but more likely with annoyance.

The greater snow geese (the most Arctic of the snow geese) winter along the Atlantic Seaboard from Maryland and Delaware to North Carolina. In late March on their way to the High Arctic they stop over at Cap Tourmente on the St. Lawrence River. This has long been a traditional stopping-off place as Cartier found them there in 1534. No one knows their exact route to the Arctic from that point. Perhaps we were the first humans they had seen along the way.

Long-tailed Jaegers were resting on the ice in loose flocks. They winter at sea and although their present wintering range has not been determined, they have been observed off the South Carolina and Florida coasts and off both coasts of South America. Like the geese, the jaegers had arrived on their traditional breeding grounds before the land was quite ready to receive them.

From Canada Point onwards the scenery changed completely. The low-lying plains were left behind. High cliffs of frost-shattered limestone now bordered the coast, broken at intervals by wide valleys down which glaciers meandered from the ice fields above, - to peter out completely as they reached the valley floor. At one time these glaciers flowed directly to the sea. In a few localities on Bylot

they still do so. But Bylot Island is slowly coming out of the "ice age". Later, at Cape Hay we found perfectly preserved beaches five hundred feet above sea-level.

Although Ootoova's load of red gasoline drums seemed incongruous on the immense expanse of white, Mucktar's team with his large canoe was most impressive. Mucktar had rigged his tent over the canoe so that his wife Koopah and the children could ride along in great comfort - caravan style. Inside the tent, although the quarters were cramped, she had set up house-keeping. The primus stove was within reach. Heaps of caribou skins provided couches for the children. Koopah was never idle even while on the trail. A baby snugly confined in the hood of her parka required attention at times but almost incessantly Koopah chewed on seal skins to make the soft kamiks which are their sole footwear. The spring thaw, and later the sharp rocks of the bare ground, are very destructive to these sealskin boots. She would never quite keep up with her family's requirements. And her husband, the provider, must at all times be properly shod, and dressed. Often I heard her sewing machine from the depths of the oomiak-tupek as our komatik passed along.

Journey to Cape Hay (2)

The last valley - and glacier - on the Navy Board Inlet side of Bylot Island is at Tay Bay. North and west of Tay Bay the mountains level off to a frost-shattered plateau which gradually slopes towards Lancaster Sound. The glaciers at this point flow northwards and directly into Lancaster Sound. The plateau, not of sufficiently high altitude to produce a glacier, is covered by an immense snow field, which almost but not quite disappears each summer. The area is exposed to the winds blowing off Ellesmere Island's ice cap to the north and the almost permanent ice pack of Barrow Strait to the west. It is no wonder that the climate here is vastly different from that of the "banana belt" of the southwest plains.

From Tay Bay westward the coast is comparatively low-lying but furrowed with ravines instead of valleys. These ravines are gouged out by the rapid spring run-off from the snow fields above. Our destination was an outermost ravine which showed up in aerial photographs as a good location from which to plan further travel. From this point we expected to reach Cape Hay along the coast if it were feasible, or strike inland in the hope of being able to reach it from the upper plateau.

Just outside Tay Bay we encountered our first rough ice. Pressure ice blocked our way as far as we could see but here and there among the jumbled mass were smooth stretches which led westwards. Pressure ice - for all practical purposes - is ice lifted, upended and strewn helter skelter by the terrific forces of tides and frost during the Arctic winter. But here, for extra good measure, immense icebergs and ploughed into the jumble and eventually became firmly cemented.

I was constantly amazed at the flexibility of the komatiks and the strains they could take without falling apart. Two of our komatiks carried about one thousand pounds each and the third close to that amount. At times we cut a trail with axes, especially brought along for such work. Mucktar's komatik with the long canoe was difficult to handle, but Ootoova's, loaded with drums of gasoline, was even more so. Occasionally the komatiks slid sideways down a sloping pan of ice and overturned. The combined action of all of us, even the children, was necessary to upright them. As a last resort we unloaded them completely.

Progress was necessarily slow but here and there were lovely smooth stretches. The dogs, anxious as we were to get out of the pressure ice, put on bursts of speed at such opportunities. All in all we made remarkably good time. Eventually we reached the vicinity of the Wollaston Islands less than ten miles from our destined camp site. Good weather had been with us for more than a week, but now our luck changed. Swirling black snow clouds came down from the north and hid the sun. It got dark and cold. We headed for the nearest land to set up camp and wait until the storm blew over.

Just before making land and before the swirling clouds ahead of us closed in completely, we caught a glimpse of the floe-edge and realized that Lancaster Sound was open. Our route to Cape Hay along the coast was cut off unless we wished to wait until the Sound could be navigated safely by canoe. Cape Hay was approximately thirty miles away and spring seemed weeks away, so there was no feeling of urgency. We set up camp at the foot of the snow field. Johnson set the radio up and we had our first contact with the outside. By appointment, "Corky" at the Meteorological Station

at Arctic Bay was listening for our signal. We came in "loud and clear". Later, "Corky" was to be my main contact with the outside.

What I recall most vividly about those several days of forced inactivity, while waiting for the storm to blow itself out, was my first "white-out". This Arctic phenomenon has often been described by explorers to which it is to each a completely different experience. My feeling was one of utter futility like trying to fight an immense powder puff. There is no sense of direction during a "white-out", as the compass is not effective in that part of the Arctic. A terrific glare, from a sun which cannot be located, filters down through the tiny particles of snow. Everything takes on an exaggerated sense of unreality. Small objects loom large and deceptively near. You lean against a boulder only to find that it is several feet away. My most horrifying and possibly most comic experience was at that time.

Rather unwisely I decided to visit a ravine scarcely a half mile from camp. I slid down an incline to the floor of the ravine to get relief from the stinging particles of snow which half blinded me and strangled me at the same time. Here on the floor of the ravine I could breathe properly again and commenced to clear the snow from my eyes and face. While doing so I became aware that leading away from me was a floundering trail which I had most certainly not made. We had seen fresh bear tracks by our camp, and here were others, not minutes old.

In a matter of moments I was back again at the top of the ravine and clinging to the overhanging lip of ice. Then ahead of me, on the fringe of the plateau, an immense white object moved.

"Another bear!" I thought. Then I could see red on the side of its face, and the more frightening thought flashed through my mind - "a wounded bear!" For several moments after the "bear" took off with a cackle and whirring of wings (it was a cock ptarmigan) I still remained "frozen" in a precarious position. To make the situation utterly ridiculous I then ^{realized} realized my hold on the overhanging ice ridge and promptly rolled back into the ravine where there was a real bear. I came out of the ravine again with much less finesse, and returned to camp.

On the third day the storm cleared completely. Johnson decided he would stay with us a few more days and help us find a trail overland to Cape Hay. We left Koopah and the children behind and took off with almost empty komatiks as we did not know what difficulties might be encountered on the plateau. Instead of long stretches of windswept ridges, the upper plateau was covered with hard packed snow three or more feet in depth. We travelled down ravines occasionally only to be stopped by steep overhanging snow banks, but by ^{trial} trail and error we eventually reached Lancaster Sound. Amazingly, we reached it at the exact point where an immense sea-bird colony began.

I cannot quite describe my feelings on arriving at Cape Hay at last and with such little effort. I had not actually known if we could reach it by komatik or if I could camp near the bird cliffs - or for that matter if the sea-bird colony positively existed. An ideal location for the summer's camp was by an esker less than one half mile from the cliffs. The set-up was perfect, and the esker most conveniently located.

Johnson and I strolled along the sea ice at the base of the murre cliffs and examined them. We were undoubtedly the first white men who had ever been so close. In the yellowish light of midnight, the milling kittiwakes and murrees took on a special charm that only a bird student can appreciate. Johnson was suitably impressed and insisted that someone of my experience could make a reasonable estimate right there and then. I promptly replied that there were at least two million birds on the cliffs. After three months of less exuberant calculations I was forced to cut this estimate in half, but my first impressions of Cape Hay remain the most vivid.

I had now reached my objective, and it was agreed that I need not return to Navy Board Inlet. Instead, Mucktar and Toonga would return with their teams and bring back Mucktar's family, our main tents and some basic supplies. Later, Mucktar would get the remaining equipment. Johnson and I would remain at the Cape in a single small tent brought along for an emergency.

There were numerous bear tracks all about. Some of them were quite fresh and we found the scattered carcasses of newly killed seals. But the only bear we saw was a large one nearly a mile away standing motionless beside a seal hole. Just before Mucktar was ready to leave for Navy Board he decided he "needed" a bear. The hunt was quickly organized as the dogs were already tackled. It was to be a hunt where the dogs are cut loose at the appropriate moment and the bear held at bay. It promised to be plenty exciting.

Out among the rough ice we lost sight of the bear and the dogs were inclined to follow recent tracks not those of our particular quarry. After a few false starts the bear was eventually located in

exactly the same position we had first observed it. Through my binoculars I obtained the impression that it was fast asleep on its feet while waiting for a reluctant seal to appear.

Within a hundred yards of the bear Mucktar began to cut his dogs loose. Johnson, some distance behind, held his dogs fast to prevent a pile up of both teams. It was a difficult job, and for a few moments I suspected just ^{that} what might happen. The bear glanced up casually when he heard the dogs and then turned back to his watch or his nap. A few moments later he realized that this was not a dream. The dogs were on him in a snarling mass, nipping his flanks, but keeping away from the certain destruction of his huge paws. The bear attempted to get away but the dogs were all around him. He backed up against a hummock of ice, stood on his hind legs, and growling horribly lunged with his forepaws at the dogs which cleverly kept just out of reach. The dogs, possibly through experience, or with some inherent ability, avoided the lunges and attacked only his flanks. Darting in for rapid nips at his long fur they danced out of range just at the crucial moment. The bear became more and more furious and was taking wider and wider lunges. Quite frequently one or more dogs are killed during such a hunt. So at the very first opportunity Mucktar took careful aim and sent a bullet ripping through the bear's head. It took three or four well-placed shots to bring the animal down. To the very last he growled fiercely and lunged out at the shadows he could not quite cope with.

It took several hours to prepare the bear and cut the meat in suitable sizes for transporting back to camp. Mucktar and Toonga finally set off for Navy Board at 4 A.M. After a meal of bear,

which tasted rather soapy, Johnson and I got into our sleeping bags. It was the first sleep I had had in 36 hours. We finally awoke 24 hours later when the boys arrived back with the tents and Mucktar's family. The final route across the plateau had taken eight hours as against our sixteen.

Sir John Lancaster His Sounde

Our camp site at Cape Hay during the summer of 1957 overlooked Lancaster Sound - the famous route to the Northwest Passage. When we first arrived at Cape Hay in June, the floe-edge was still several miles off and the Sound was clogged with loose ice drifting back and forth. Eventually the main body of ice dispersed, but periodically wide ribbons of pack-ice moved down the center of the Sound and jammed the inlets when the wind was on-shore. There were days, of course, when Lancaster Sound was placid, and mirrored the south coast of Devon Island, which appeared deceptively near. Those days were rare and usually forecast a storm. Soon again, the Sound became turbulent as high winds funnelled in from Baffin Bay to the east or Barrow's Strait to the west. From either direction the full force of the gale was borne by the high cliffs of Cape Hay, against which the waves battered and carved up the contours with the additional rams of chunks of ice.

In late July, a large field of ice flowed eastward through Lancaster Sound, indicating that the pack ice from Barrow Strait was on the move. Early in August, a thin dribble from the Wollaston Islands told us that at last Navy Board Inlet was "coming out" and soon there would be an open route to Pond Inlet. For the first time during three summers of Arctic field work, I was able to be of assistance to the ships in my region. Daily I reported the exact condition of the ice in Lancaster Sound to the Meteorological Station at Arctic Bay. This information was in turn passed to the Labrador, the MacLean, the C.D. Howe and other vessels. It was the first time that an "ice observer" had been so strategically situated.

There were always icebergs in Lancaster Sound. Some of them

had been imprisoned there for many years. A popular impression is that icebergs which reach the latitude of Newfoundland originate in west Greenland. This is not necessarily correct. The huge and high glaciers in many parts of the Canadian Arctic are continuously "calving" icebergs. One particularly productive area is west Ellesmere Island. Bergs from west Ellesmere reach Lancaster Sound via Penny Strait and Wellington Channel. If conditions are favourable they may continue to Baffin Bay. More often than not, their course lies close to the coast with its various cross tides and indented land masses. Such icebergs are restricted and may move back and forth in Lancaster Sound all summer. Finally they plough far into the pack ice and remain all winter in one location. One such iceberg was a peculiar mass of pinnacles and turrets which I nicknamed "Bozo". I first saw Bozo (and had not nicknamed him then) near the Wollaston Islands on our way to Cape Hay. He was solidly stuck in the pressure ice and possibly fast aground as well. Finally, currents, winds and the pressure of the pack ice set him free again. All during July and most of August, Bozo kept a regular schedule opposite our camp. Early in the morning he would be off Cape Hay moving eastwards and during late evening he would be back, moving in the opposite direction. A huge iceberg like Bozo maintained its own power by inertia once it got underway. Bozo set up an immense turbulence in the rear and ploughed through icefields and smaller bergs like a huge ice-breaker. Its momentum carried it along strongly even after the tides had turned. Eventually, the momentum of its bulk and the strong tides (or wind) would cancel each other out. Bozo would swing sluggishly in the Sound and then gradually pick up speed and

move in the opposite direction. Around the middle of August we missed Bozo on his daily "plough" through the Sound. We figured he must have made the center of the Sound and with a favourable wind had continued on to Baffin Bay. Later, we found the familiar turrets and pinnacles aground near the Wollaston Islands not far from the exact spot he had spent the previous winter. And there Bozo is now, surrounded by pack ice which is being rafted by tides and frost into a jumble of pressure-ice. And there he must remain until next July he is set loose to prowl Lancaster Sound.

The first white men to see Lancaster Sound were undoubtedly William Baffin, Robert Bylot and their crew in 1616. Baffin, probably the best navigator of his age, reached Lancaster Sound on July 12. He named it "Sir John Lancaster His Sounde" after one of his benefactors, but did not explore it very thoroughly as it was filled with ice. His men were also ill with scurvy, so he returned home to England.

Baffin's discoveries were largely forgotten for nearly two centuries. The reason might have been that Purchas, who published the accounts of those early explorers, did not include Baffin's charts and his tables of observations as they were "somewhat troublesome and too costly to insert."

In 1817, Sir John Barrow, aware of the northerly penetration of whalers in the Canadian Arctic, revived Baffin's forgotten discoveries. Barrow submitted a plan to the British Government which showed the possibility of a Northwest Passage to the Orient through Lancaster Sound, if the Sound actually existed. Sir John Ross was accordingly sent out during the following year expressly to determine if Baffin's accounts were correct.

Sir John Ross was probably more a dilettante than a bonafide explorer. He delayed his expedition in Greenland where he examined the "red snow" (caused by an algae) and wrote ponderously and at great length on its possible origin. Ross gave the fanciful name of Arctic Highlanders to the Eskimos he encountered. When he eventually arrived at Lancaster Sound, it was August 30. He sailed for 50 miles up Lancaster Sound and "distinctly saw land around the bottom of the Bay, forming a chain of mountains connected with those which extended along the north and south side." On his maps, Ross placed the Crocker Mountains across Lancaster Sound just west of Cape Hay.

William Edward Parry, Ross's second in command, was quite emphatic in his opinions that Ross's "Crocker Mountains" did not actually exist. There were nasty recriminations when both returned to England, but the British Government ^{were inclined} ~~chose~~ to believe Parry. The result was that another expedition, this time under the command of Parry, got underway to continue the exploration of Lancaster Sound.

Parry reached the entrance of Lancaster Sound on August 1, 1819. In front of him lay neither mountains nor ice. He sailed westward, the first ship ever to do so in this region, and so opened up the assumed gateway to the Orient.

Lancaster Sound, the waterway along which Parry sailed, is like a metropolitan boulevard leading into a great square; to the west it becomes Barrow Strait, which terminates in Melville Sound. Southward from this boulevard are three other highways; Prince Regent Inlet, Peel Sound and M'Clintock Channel. Parry named the many islands he passed. Those to the north of Lancaster Sound were North Devon, Cornwallis, Bathurst and Melville; those to the south were

Cockburn, North Somerset and Prince of Wales.

Parry's discoveries opened the way for an attack on the Canadian Arctic through Lancaster Sound, not for geographic reasons, but for an extensive search for the still illusive pathway to the Orient. The most famous of the expeditions so engaged was that of Sir John Franklin. In the summer of 1845, Sir John Franklin with 129 men sailed through Lancaster Sound and never returned. During the next decade a score of ships, British, American, and privately sponsored by Lady Franklin, searched for the lost expedition. Never had the Canadian Arctic been subjected to such scrutiny. Nor has there been a period since when more ^{geographic} discoveries have been made. Many of the ships called at St. John's, Newfoundland, on their way north for additional provisions and crew. Undoubtedly there were Newfoundlanders engaged in this famous search, although I have been unable to track down their names.

Finally the fate of Sir John Franklin and his men was determined by F.L. M'Clintock in 1859. It was from M'Clintock's account that I obtained my original and only knowledge of Cape Hay. M'Clintock had heard of a ship ashore at Maud Bight east of Cape Hay and searched the vicinity of the north coast of Bylot for survivors. Unfortunately stormy weather preventing M'Clintock from investigating the grounded ship and he never actually got within three miles of Cape Hay itself due to a moving ice pack. The ship at Maud Bight had an interesting sequel. It had long been determined that it could not have been Franklin's and was assumed to be an old whaler. Johnson planned to examine the wreck on his roundabout way back to Pond Inlet in June. Rough ice prevented his getting into the Bight. I had every intention

of doing so later in the summer when the ice had cleared out, as it was merely 15 miles from my camp. When the time came, I found I was too low on gasoline to take a chance. During the summer a helicopter from the C.D. Howe put ashore at Maud Bight and examined the relics. Thus we were scooped, on our own grounds, by a very efficient and modern means of transportation.

To me, as a biologist, Lancaster Sound has a special significance. As pointed out, it is the entrance from Baffin Bay to the waterways of the Eastern Canadian Arctic. Through this route, a "Northwest Passage" in more ways than one, hordes of narwhales, walrus, beluga and seals which have wintered in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait migrate annually. All during the summer one of my many duties was to estimate the numbers of those marine mammals as they passed along, and the conditions under which they migrated. Our camp site at Cape Hay was in an ideal location to do this as it overlooked the Sound and most of the migration occurred near the coast, within our sight. I shall always associate Lancaster Sound with the undulating schools of narwhales twisting and sliding among the ice-pack, the playful herds of harp seals which day after day moved westward, throwing themselves half out of the water like playful dolphins, and of walrus snorting and belching as they clambered about the flat pans of ice.

And best of all, for my special interest is bird study, one of the largest sea-bird colonies in the entire Eastern Canadian Arctic is situated at Cape Hay in Lancaster Sound.

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