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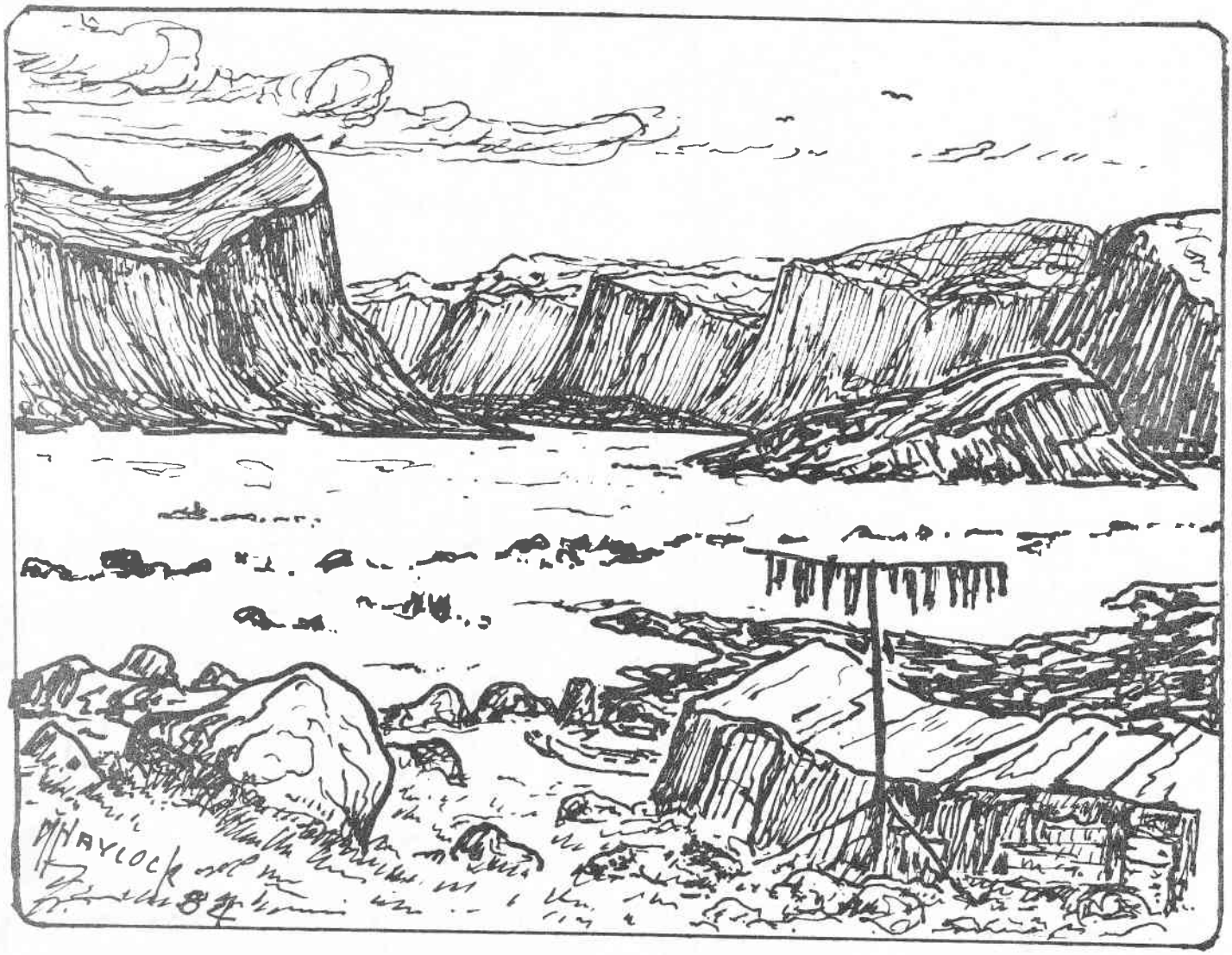

THE ARCTIC CIRCULAR

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Cover Picture: Pangnirtung Fiord, 1984.
From the sketchbook of Maurice Haycock

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AROUND THE CIRCLE

276th Meeting, 11 January 1983. The Annual General Meeting

After the conclusion of business an excellent film produced by Crawley Films was shown. "In the days of the river boats" is an archival documentary using old footage dating from the early 1900's to 1935. It shows the building and work of the river boats on the Yukon, particularly the S.S. Klondike.

277th Meeting, 8 February 1983

Mr. Sam Metcalfe, of the Cultural and Linguistic Section of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, spoke on "Inuktitut as a living language". He dealt with a wide range of issues relating to Inuktitut, including modern techniques to encourage young Inuit to develop and maintain a proficiency in the language; teaching Inuktitut to southerners as a second language; the systems that have been established to modernize and standardize the Inuktitut orthography and vocabulary, and the challenges of working in Inuktitut in a southern, technological, society.

278th Meeting, 8 March 1983

Dr. R.M. Koerner spoke on "Climatic history revealed by polar ice cores". He described how climatic change over the last 100,000 years could be judged from

deposition of dust, pollen, ions, and metals which are incorporated in the northern ice sheets. The oxygen isotope ratios and the record of summer melt from ice layers can also be used as a valuable temperature record.

279th Meeting, 12 April 1983

Professor William Barr, of the University of Saskatchewan, described the work of the First International Polar Year, August 1882 to August 1883, with more detailed comment on the work of the research stations in the Canadian Arctic.

A Summer in Pangnirtung. By John Bennett [1].

Pangnirtung, as it slid languidly out from under the oilstreaked wing of the descending DC-3, seemed unequal to my apprehensions. A brownish and trivial smudge on the snow-flecked tundra, the settlement looked like a mottled handkerchief which, dropped fluttering from some passing aircraft, had come to rest outspread on a tiny beach wedged between the mountains and the ice-choked fiord. Even on final approach, the eye could in a twinkling take in its entire area, and the hamlet seemed to give little cause for the excitement, liberally seasoned with uneasiness, that had kept me from sleep the night before. Quite apart from the normal butterflies prior to arriving among strangers of a foreign language and culture, I had been apprehensive because an accident had prevented communication of my plans to the hamlet council, information which normally precedes the arrival of a student or researcher in an Inuit community. As the venerable aircraft touched down and rumbled to a halt my little anxieties began to return, and when the big cabin door creaked open on to a chill, drizzly July 1st and what seemed a sea of unfamiliar and scrutinizing faces, the hamlet no longer appeared insignificant. With every self-conscious step I took down the rickety stairway Pangnirtung and its inhabitants grew more imposing.

The faint hope I had cherished that some word of my arrival might have got through and that someone might actually come to the airstrip to welcome me was soon extinguished, as no one spoke to me from the little crowd of onlookers, which in any case soon dispersed, leaving me alone. Although it was obvious that my first task would be to find lodgings, I was uncertain how to proceed.

My decision to come north had been born out of my enormous interest in the Inuit people, kindled as it was by my first year of graduate work in Northern and Native Studies at Carleton University. I felt that until I had

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1. This article was written in January 1984. The writer has since spent another five months in Pangnirtung. He noted that changes had been made in the decor of the Coffee Shop, and in the amount of space and number of coin-operated games in the Pizza Shop.

gained some experience in the north my work would be of little value, and while it was obvious to me that in two months I could expect to achieve hardly more than a superficial understanding of Inuit life in Pangnirtung I was determined to make at the very least a good start. To this end I intended to do what I could to live as a member of the community. I hoped to find lodgings with a family, to begin learning their language, to spend time out on the land, and to make friends, especially among those of my own generation. I was encouraged in this by the support of Professor Graham Rowley and by Rhoda Innuksuk, then of the Inuit Committee on National Issues. Rhoda had suggested to me that investigating the concerns of young people, who have for a number of years been showing signs of great social stress, would be a worthwhile study. While this was the subject that most intrigued me I was reluctant to engage in a specific research project, as foremost in my mind was the desire to be accepted as much as possible into the community. Flexibility was essential, and I was wary of distancing myself from people by a commitment to the acquisition of a specific body of information. Inuit society frowns on the asking of great streams of questions, and I had no wish to become known as someone who did. I chose Pangnirtung because of its proximity to Auyuittuq National Park, which I hoped would allow me insight into the interaction of local people with tourists, as well as access to some of the most spectacular scenery in the Eastern Arctic.

On my arrival, however, one question for the moment eclipsed all others: that was the whereabouts of the Anglican mission, for it had been suggested to me that I might possibly stay with one of the ministers in training there, Joshua Arreak. I spied in the distance a familiar white flag bearing the Cross of St. George, and set off toward it. As I walked along the road I would dearly have loved to appear less conspicuous, for I had the sensation of not only being watched by the many children outside playing, but of being peered at inquiringly by the very windows of the houses I passed. Nonetheless I knew it was important that from the start I be noticed by as many people as possible; and my unfamiliar face, the large rucksack on my back, and the violin case under my arm were as effective publicity as anyone could have desired. It was not long before Kevin, a boy of about twelve, rode up on his bicycle and asked what I was looking for. In short order I learned that

Joshua Arreak was away in Pond Inlet. I was not discouraged, as I had been given the name of one other person with whom I could perhaps stay, Jeannie. When asked where she might be found neither Kevin nor any of the several others he asked could be certain. The unpleasant notion that both of these contacts would be unavailable had not occurred to me, and now that it was reality I felt as if I had been knocked slightly off balance. To recover my footing I employed the southern logic I had brought with me: I decided to seek help from the minister, who would certainly know when Joshua was expected back, and who might know someone who could put me up until his return. Had I diligently applied myself to it, I could not have devised a scheme which would have more effectively complicated the next twenty-four hours.

I followed Kevin to the pool hall where he assured me we would find the minister. Inside the little green building eight or nine elderly men and women crowded around two billiard tables. More people, some of them young, sat along the walls observing the tournament, part of the community's Canada Day celebration. When Kevin brought over the minister, a dignified looking older man named Elijah, two adolescent girls came with him, and with one acting as interpreter I began to explain my situation to him. He told me that Joshua would not return until the end of the summer, and after asking me several times what it was I intended to do in Pangnirtung and why I had approached him in particular, he said I could stay at his house if I wished to do so. I hesitated, as I was uncertain of how I would be perceived if I lived with a community member with such a clearly defined role as that of the minister, and I had hoped to live in a household where there were young people. At the same time I was afraid that by not accepting I might somehow insult him and thereby commence my stay by discrediting myself in the eyes of a prominent and respected member of the community. The latter fear, combined with a strong desire to end the suspense over where I would sleep, won out, and it was with a feeling of relief that I thanked Elijah and carried my belongings over to the two-storey house flying the Anglican flag. I then returned to the pool hall to talk with those I had just met there. No sooner had I arrived than a young woman I had not seen before approached and asked without smiling if I would be staying with her. She introduced herself as Jeannie. I said that my things were already at the minister's house, and

although I did not wish to insult him I would indeed prefer to stay with her and her family, if she would agree to it. I asked whether I might risk insulting the minister by such a change; her reply was indistinct and led me to believe she thought no harm would be done. She walked with me back to the large house where I intended to fetch my things and carry them to her home. On entering the little hallway I picked up my backpack and began to put it on, at the same time Jeannie pointed to a corner bedroom and told me I could sleep in there. For a few seconds my confusion was total. Then, in response to my blank look, Jeannie revealed that she lived in the house as well, and that the minister was in fact her father. She immediately went outside, and I sat down in bewildered solitude to contemplate the events of my first three hours in Pangnirtung.

Around six o'clock the sound of conversation, the rasping of a television, and the thought of food, which I had not eaten since early that morning, lured me up the stairs to the main living area. Elijah, his wife, three or four teenaged girls, and Jeannie, sat in the large room. Elijah introduced me to everyone and then began again to question me, this time through Jeannie, as to what it was that I intended to do in Pangnirtung, and why it was that the community had not been notified of my plans. Once more I replied as clearly as I could, dipping into my dwindling reserves of calm, for although I was not being treated unkindly it seemed to me I was being tolerated rather than welcomed. When Elijah was satisfied, or so I thought, and the conversation had apparently switched to another topic, I remained for a short while and then went back downstairs as I was beginning to feel uncomfortable. A half-hour later I returned, determined to remedy whatever it was that seemed to be starting my stay off on the wrong foot. No sooner had I sat down in the one unoccupied space, on the sofa beside Elijah, than he rose abruptly and left the room. The others gradually followed and in the space of five minutes I was left with only the mocking cylopean regard of the television for company. Unnerved at this frank display of disapproval I left the house and made my way toward the community hall where there was to be a festive tea in honour of Canada Day.

* * *

In contrast to the gloomy scene I had just escaped, the large single room of the low-roofed windowless building was alive with merriment. People lined the walls, seated on groaning benches and talking, laughing, and drinking tea. In one corner of the hall was a little stage on which a woman, perched on a stool, squeezed a lively jig from an accordion. On the floor in front of her an old man with a twinkle in his eye improvised a comic dance. His steps and gestures were at home somewhere between a jig and a drum dance, and the climax of his act, which occurred over and over, was the solemn removal of imaginary lice and other normally inedible material from various parts of his body. He would then, with a mischievous grin and amid shouts of laughter and teasing from the crowd, pop the offensive and non-existent articles into his mouth. Immense and seemingly bottomless boxes of cookies made their way around the room and I, wedged into place on a bench near the stage, soon gave in to the infectious gaiety. At midnight the party showed no signs of slowing down; having hardly eaten or slept for twenty-four hours, I had nevertheless run out of energy. But rest was to elude me for the time being.

Soon after I entered Elijah's house, and was preparing for bed, a woman who I had not seen before came downstairs and told me gravely that Elijah and his wife had been awaiting my return and wished to speak to me, for it was still not clear to them who or what I was. They had asked her, their daughter-in-law, to interpret in the hope that they would at last be able to understand what I intended in Pangnirtung, and why the community had not been told beforehand. I remember thinking, as I climbed the stairs, fatigued, and sat down on a varnished chair opposite the dignified figure of Elijah, that if I were not thrown out of Pangnirtung by the following day I should easily qualify for a diplomatic posting on my eventual return to the south. The explanations I gave were, as before, as simple and direct as I could manage, although this time it took all my concentration in order to match the placid aspect of my interrogator, and even so I doubt that my increasing concern was not perceived by the others in the room. At the end of half-an-hour the minister told me that I would have to find other lodgings, "not because we don't like you", but because his wife was not comfortable with a qallunaak, that is, a white person, who as yet spoke no Inuktitut, living in her house. I was

nonetheless free to spend the night there. They smiled and thanked me for speaking with them. I thanked them in return, but the smile on my face as I left the room felt as if it were made of clay and would surely crack and fall away if anyone touched it. Although I could understand the concerns of the older couple I felt enormously deflated and was fearful that this episode had wrecked my chances of establishing good relations with the community. There was little else to do for the moment but lose myself in sleep.

The next morning Elijah appeared at my door and to my surprise smiled warmly and indicated that breakfast was ready. While I ate he sat at the table and taught me some Inuktitut words. I was relieved that he had apparently regained the friendly manner with which he first greeted me, and also that I was finally getting something to eat. After breakfast I took a walk through town, uncertain of how to look for a place to stay. I decided to try to find Meeka Kilabuk, whose name had been mentioned to me before my departure, and when I asked a man for directions he indicated a white and green house flying a Canadian flag. In front of the door I hesitated for an instant, not being used to the very pleasant Inuit custom of not bothering to knock, and then walked in.

The sincere and welcoming smile Meeka bestowed on me instantly set me at ease, and my anxieties rapidly dissolved in the steaming enamel cup of tea she pressed into my hand. Why, she asked, hadn't I come to see her as soon as I arrived? She had lived in Ottawa and was familiar with southern ways, and could therefore understand my situation infinitely better than Elijah, who, in fact, had visited her several times the previous day to ask anxiously whether she knew anything about me. He had no conception of what a university student was, and his description of me had given her little or no clue as to who or what I might be, although it certainly had aroused her curiosity. It had occurred to her that I could be a fugitive of some kind, perhaps a draft dodger. It was obvious that she could settle these doubts only by talking to me herself, and she had asked Elijah to send me to see her. Although I had not yet received the message, Meeka had been expecting my visit. She did not hesitate in gently teasing me for my use of inappropriate <u>qallunaak</u> logic; the experience I had just been through showed the failure here of a course of action that would have been

perfectly reasonable in the south. I had taken the southern model of a small town clergyman and transposed it. The Minister, I had conjectured, having studied himself and having an intimate knowledge of his parishioners would not only be able to understand my situation, but would also be able to assist me in finding appropriate accommodation. I learned that his experience was so widely different from my own that try as he might he could not understand my actions. His knowledge of the settlement was in addition probably no better than that of anyone else, as Meeka told me I could have approached almost any person for the aid I desired. Elijah, though a kindly man, was not one of the best people in the community to have approached first, and by doing so I had caused him needless concern and briefly, but thoroughly, unnerved myself.

Thanks to the kindness and keen judgement of Meeka, who asked Peteroosie Qappik to consider taking me in, I spent the summer living and travelling with a family in whose company I soon ceased feeling like a stranger. I had scarcely moved into the house when Silasie, a young man of about my own age and the fourth of Peteroosie's ten children, strode smiling into my room and introduced himself. He noticed my violin case and told me he played the guitar. Within the hour we had put the two together, and that afternoon was born a friendship and musical partnership that was not only extremely gratifying to me in a personal sense, but which meant that the two of us came to be sought after as visitors to many houses and tents and as players at community gatherings. Indeed, on my second evening in Pangnirtung I found myself on stage in the community hall staring uncertainly past a jutting microphone into a blur of expectant faces, all waiting to hear some toe-tapping music from the only fiddler in town. The Inuktitut word for violin is almost identical to that for file, and the state of my nerves on that occasion was such that I believe the sound produced would have been little different had I been playing on the tool or the instrument.

That gathering, although it took place on July 2 was also part of the Canada Day celebrations, and the richness of Pangnirtung society was evident from the many musicians and impromptu comedians who came forward to perform. One master mimic was a man named Philipoosie, whose antics often had me laughing as hard as anyone else

despite my almost total ignorance of the language and the fact that some of the jokes were clearly made at my expense as the only qallunaak in the hall.

Leaning against the wall near where I sat was a group of about six teenagers. One in particular caught my attention, a girl of about fifteen whom I saw a few days later manipulating a Rubik Cube at breakneck speed. On this first occasion she was wearing a Walkman-type portable tape player with headphones, to which she appeared to be listening with total absorption. She leaned over and in a flat tone, which to me indicated she fully expected a negative response, asked if I were enjoying myself. When I said yes she replied that she was not, and that the recorded music was "much better" than the live entertainment in the hall. While her comment was no more than an expression of her personal taste, it was nevertheless a significant reflection coming as it did from a member of the first complete generation of Inuit to be born and raised in a settlement.

Radically different from a corresponding day in the adolescence of a member of the preceding generation in whose outpost camp life, hunting, fishing, and trapping were of primary importance, a summer day in town for a Pangnirtung teenager might run something as follows: having been out late the previous night he wakes up around noon or a little later and stays in bed for another half-hour or so listening to music on a tape player. His family's house is one of the newer ones, cedar-sided and semi-detached, with forced-air heating and hot and cold running water. He takes a shower and goes downstairs to the kitchen. During breakfast, CBC North Television, an almost constant presence in the house, is displaying the carefully concocted mixture of melodrama and hysteria which is the American television soap opera "All My Children". Another teenager lies on the floor three feet from the screen, the picture of concentration. In a little while he leaves the house and walks up the hill to the Hudson's Bay Company store where there is a good chance of meeting friends, either talking on the landing outside or strolling up and down the aisles. He stays there for a time, and before leaving buys a candy bar and cigarettes, then walks with friends the quarter-mile to the Pangnirtung Co-op. There he meets more friends, has a cup of coffee, and has a look at the shelves of carvings and ivory jewellery to see if any new items have

appeared. The late afternoon might see him at home or at a friend's place listening to music or watching television, at this time showing half-hour situation comedies, such as "Three's Company". The evening might start at Pang Pizza which, despite the size of its red and white sign visible from the airstrip, is a tiny stand-up counter where one can buy pizzas and other fast food. Video movies are also available for rent there. As there is no place to sit, Pang Pizza is not suitable for lingering if the teenager is not interested in playing the single video game, he might stroll over to the coffee shop. Also known as Peter's Place, this is a popular spot for teenagers to congregate, and offers fast food, about six video games, and recorded music. The floor area is about the same as that of a local house of medium size, the tables sport red chequered oilcloths, and Hollywood beauty queens in bathing suits flash glossy smiles from coloured posters adorning the walls. Peter's Place is run entirely by young people, and this helps to create an atmosphere in which they obviously feel at ease, as many spend entire evenings there, talking, playing video games or cards, against a background of steady rock beats pumped out by the jukebox.

During the summer months the young people hold dances on Wednesday and Friday nights, the music being whichever of the latest songs the disc jockey can lay his hands on. In July a visiting group of army cadets from the south brought with them an eclectic selection of cassette tapes which included some German rock'n roll. These were not only played at every dance, but copies found their way into many of the houses and tents I visited. The dances were not religiously attended by all teenagers but a sizeable core of regulars meant that the music never played to an empty house; often the little hall, dimly lit by a single lamp covered by an orange plastic bag, would be packed full, the dull booming of the bass audible many houses away until well into the next morning. The best dances, according to two young friends of mine, were those attended by the army cadets, who as part of an arctic indoctrination course spent several weeks camped half-a-mile from town. The boisterous presence of these young men and women was to some a welcome change from the array of familiar faces seen week in and week out at the dances. Nevertheless these newcomers remained relatively detached from the local youth, as each group, made up of those who knew each other

quite well, was naturally shy of the other. One evening a female cadet from Quebec, obviously outgoing and wishing to bridge the gap, approached a group of local males, introduced herself, and attempted to start a conversation. The mumbled response was indistinct enough to cause her to apologize for her heavily accented English, and to ask the young men if they indeed spoke the language, to which one replied in a joking tone that they did not. This extinguished the remaining courage of the young cadet, who smiled nervously and returned to her cluster of green-clad comrades standing near the opposite wall. The manner of the cadets was always noisy and rambunctious, in stark contrast to the very reserved demeanour of the local youth, and this did nothing to endear one group to the other. There was nonetheless some interaction between them at dances and for the duration of its stay the cadet camp was a stop for some local young people on their daily circuits through the community. The cadets always left the dances at a fixed hour, and at this time the community hall emptied as those within poured out in order to watch the company's spectacular transformation, at the hoarse but strenuous urging of the moustached commanding officer, into an orderly double column. The ensuing parade, somehow ridiculous in this context, moved eastward through the length of the community to the campsite on a damp piece of ground, halfway between the squat cylindrical sentries of the fuel storage depot and the tickertape wastes of the settlement dump. The dance would then resume, and continue until about three in the morning, when someone would turn on the main lights and the occupants, blinking at the sudden brightness and still charged with the energy of the music, would spill out into the dusk and the cool air. Many would pass the next hour or more walking slowly through town, from one end to the other and back.

This agreeable end to an evening spent sweating in the hall's smoke-ridden confines was sometimes characterized by a peculiar tension in the air which I can only describe as intense anticipation. I experienced this myself several times, particularly on one occasion while walking with two friends, when I am certain the three of us felt similarly, as if some unknown and dramatic event was about to occur; yet we were equally aware, as we strode along the dark and familiar road, that the events of this night, if left to themselves, would probably be no different from those of any other. As we passed the school the tension broke. One friend scooped up a pile of

rocks and hurled them at the flat expanse of aluminium-clad wall, where they resounded on impact in a staccato of metallic crashes. We ran ahead to the hamlet garage to see which of the trucks and earth-moving machinery parked there had been left unlocked. Although we had no intention of inflicting any damage the mood of that evening gave me insight into the kind of tension which could find release in petty crime.

* * *

I was to be given the opportunity to experience first-hand another kind of tension, and one not limited to young people. The Qappik family was involved in the operation of a summer fishing camp where I spent several weeks. This camp, a cluster of nine small plywood cabins and a canvas-topped cookhouse, is located at Tongait, an inlet off Kingnait Fiord, about twenty miles from Pangnirtung by boat. The inlet forms the end of a huge boulder-strewn U-shaped valley, and nestled in the valley floor is a shallow river whose mouth in July and most of August is packed with arctic char at high tide. These fish attract tourists from southern Canada, the United States, and Europe, who gladly spend large sums of money for three or four days sport.

For the 1983 season, Tongait Fish camp had been contracted to Austin Airways of Timmins, Ontario, who, as partial payment, were scheduled to fly in four prefabricated cabins, a large propane range and oven, an extra outhouse, and a supply of furnishings and other equipment. These arrived on the same plane as the first tourists, and therefore a large convoy of boats was needed for the first trip in to the camp. Peteroosie, whose brother ran Tongait in partnership with another man, had been hired as a carpenter to help assemble the cabins and as an outfitter to transport tourists to and from camp. As a temporary member of his family I was one of the men from the community who went along to load and unload the equipment. The scanty information given me, combined with my exaggerated reluctance to ask too many questions, had given birth to the erroneous notion that the entire fish camp consisted of the material I was about to help load on to the freighter canoes, and that it was going to be assembled, used for three days by the airline president and his friends, and then disassembled and flown home. This mythical notion was to me a flagrant example of unadulterated big-shotism, and as I struggled to the boats

with the stacks of two-by-fours, the awkward sheets of plywood that caught the wind, and case upon clinking case of beer, my attitude toward the new arrivals, who on top of everything insisted that the work be done at a feverish pace, was less than cordial. For the moment I preferred to avoid having to speak to them. The result of this bristling ill humour extended beyond the bounds of its original and rather egoistic purpose and gave me direct insight into the attitudes of some tourists toward their Inuit hosts. As I never spoke to them, nor to the white lodge employees who had driven the truckload of supplies to the water's edge, the newcomers assumed that I too was an Inuk, a mistake no doubt encouraged by my sun-darkened skin and dark eyes. I noticed that they seemed uncomfortable with the Inuit, and spoke to them in an overly simple fashion, as one might address someone of very limited intelligence. At the same time they appeared quite concerned with establishing some manner of good relations, which after their fashion meant such gestures as presenting coins to children. Of the local people setting up the camp, Peteroosie was one of the oldest and most dignified; he is highly respected in the community. In addition to being an experienced hunter and expert boatman he is a skilled carpenter and boat builder, and was also the mayor of Pangnirtung for more than five years. To me he was like a father while I stayed in his household, and he demonstrated great patience in teaching me Inuktitut as well as a singular knack for grasping the intent of my usually garbled attempts at communication. Working in conjunction with the Europeans he nonetheless assumed a clearly subordinate role and accepted, at least on the exterior, being ordered about and spoken to in pidgin. At one point a particularly obnoxious individual, at least twenty years his junior, attempted to get his attention by making a "pssst" noise. To this Peteroosie responded with no outward sign of offence, and it seemed he was accustomed to being treated in this way by certain southerners who saw not the dignity of the man but instead a native who in their interpretation was to be shown what to do. As for myself I was spoken to in the same way, slowly, with clear enunciation, and pointing at objects referred to where possible.

At Silasie's urging I had brought my fiddle to Tongait, and he and I would often play a little distance from the camp late in the evening, and sometimes for the entire night. On one such occasion several fishermen, who

had spent the evening drinking and who now were trying some early morning angling, heard the music and ambled over to where we were playing, in the lee of a large boulder facing the yawning, sunspeckled sweep of the huge valley. They stopped directly in front of us and stood there, beaming beerily and snapping photographs. One told us, slowly and in a voice that oozed sincerity, how wonderful it was that we made music. The implication was clearly that we should each receive at the very least a pat on the head for our efforts, but the man contented himself with patting me on the knee and did not, as it had seemed he might, attempt to press a shiny new quarter into my palm.

Drinking clearly ranked a close second to sport fishing as a pastime among a significant portion of visitors. Tongait lies just outside the fifteen-mile radius around Pangnirtung declared alcohol-free by a 1977 community liquor plebiscite; as the fishermen bring in large quantities the camp is seen as something of an oasis by certain local people who like to drink. Austin Airways wished its clients to have the liberty to drink their fill but apparently feared any disruption of camp routine that might result from alcohol use among camp employees. The company, therefore, attempted to discourage any offering of alcohol to Inuit working at the camp. This meant that fishermen were free to teeter about with glass or bottle in hand but the rest, like juveniles, were forbidden a single drop. It was obvious that this uncomfortable situation could not last long and it indeed crumbled within forty-eight hours when an unsuccessful fisherman, whose search for solace had brought him within several gulps of the bottom of a rum bottle, offered, in exchange for a fish, a can of beer to the young man who quietly helped him to his cabin from the water's edge where he had fallen down. The fisherman had pleaded that none of his fellows be told. This event marked the beginning of a series of thefts by a few young men of beer from the coolers the fishermen kept outside their cabins. I suspect that those responsible for the pilfering, which recurred periodically throughout the summer, saw it as justifiable given the circumstances. Bootleg alcohol made its way into the Inuit camp from time to time through local people with contacts in Frobisher Bay. When supplies were expected from Pangnirtung, heralding a drinking party that evening, the air would by late afternoon grow electric with anticipation. Drinking was a

recreation in itself, and although usually done out of sight of the tourists, certain people would sometimes, and with various degrees of success, attempt to ingratiate themselves with the fishermen, in hopes that the latter would feel obligated to give them alcohol. I had twice become a player in this scheme before I realized what was happening.

One evening when I was still shy about my role as a fiddler I was outside playing for a group of Inuit who had made it plain they wanted some music. Within minutes of the first note the entire tourist population of the camp, about thirty-five doctors and dentists on an exotic three-day business management course, and revellers all, arrived on the scene with drinks in hand determined to join, with much hooting and stomping, what they mistook for a square dance. Looking around for dance partners, and quite understandably finding nothing suitable from within their own ranks, they pounced on the three Inuit women present, who sat immobile and stony-faced. As this unwelcome intrusion shattered the former atmosphere of quiet content, I immediately lost any desire to play. I found myself in an awkward position, for if I obliged the fishermen and the sole Inuk who was actively encouraging me, a man whose wishes I usually tried to respect, I would simply excite them further and cause even more irritation, especially to the women. I nevertheless succumbed to the pressure of the expectant faces, hoping that when I exhausted my scanty repertoire the crowd would disperse. The only Inuk who made any show of enthusiasm and who took part, albeit halfheartedly, in the ensuing clumsy jubilation was the individual mentioned. This man frequently asked Silasie and me to play for the tourists, who were always game, and as we departed, thirsty, from a particularly long concert in a cabin that smelled of whiskey he pointed over his shoulder at the little plywood structure and referred to those within as less than perfect hosts. I realized that his hope of getting a drink was the main reason he had encouraged us to play.

Most of the few times I saw openly expressed anger among people, and the only times at Tongait, occurred when they had been drinking, and this usually among the young people. I noticed that when shouting at each other they almost invariably used English, perhaps finding its rich profanity better suited to the expression of rage than their own language. The normal atmosphere

inside a large family tent was one of communal warmth and peace, punctuated by cups of tea and bites of pilot biscuits or bannock. These also formed the standby diet when out hunting, until fresh meat was available. I subsisted on it many times, the most memorable of those being the whale hunt in August.

* * *

As the Beluga population has not recovered from pre-war commercial fishing, the hunting of this small whale is restricted by an annual quota. The hunters view the approach of the semi-annual beluga hunt with intense anticipation. Coupled with the excitement of hunting these intelligent animals, is the promise of fresh whale skin (maktak) and dried whale meat both now scarce in Pangnirtung. The summer months see the belugas at the head of Cumberland Sound in Clearwater Fiord which, oddly, has some of the siltiest water in the area, about sixty miles by boat from Pangnirtung. The August hunt this year opened on a Saturday morning, and closed the same afternoon when the federal fisheries staff on site felt the quota of twenty-three whales had been reached.

I accompanied Peteroosie and his son Silasie in their motorboat. We arrived on Thursday evening after a three-hour boat trip, during which Peteroosie had again impressed me with his unerring navigation through treacherous tidal channels and thick fog which often entirely obscured the land. Already a number of hunters had arrived at the Clearwater camp. Accordion music drifted through the night air, arctic char hung drying outside some of the tents, and the still warm carcass of a freshly killed caribou awaited us on the deck of a diesel-powered Peterhead, which several hunters had chartered. That night we slept in Peteroosie's motorboat under an old piece of tent fitted to a homemade frame, providing a secure, if a little leaky, shelter from the fine drizzle and raw air. The next day the hunters spent relaxing and anticipating the joy of the hunt, while still more canoes and another Peterhead appeared in the fiord. By late afternoon there were at least forty small boats, many with two hunters on board, and the two large craft each with five or six.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans biologists had spent the summer at the Clearwater camp studying the

habits of the belugas and were responsible for ensuring that the quota was not exceeded. To this end they met with the hunters at two p.m. on Friday to remind them of the limit of twenty-three whales and to find out what plan the hunters had made for respecting it. The Inuit, on the other hand, were curious to learn what method the biologists had devised to ensure that the quota not be exceeded. What followed was a predictably circular and at times heated discussion during which each side accused the other of having failed in its responsibility to develop a workable system. The Inuit said that they respected the law but felt it was unfair to attempt to resolve such a major issue in a last minute discussion. More reasonable and considerate action would have been a meeting in the hamlet several months before the hunt, at which both sides could have worked out an acceptable method of meeting the quota. With the hunt less than twelve hours away, it was imperative that a makeshift plan be developed. Foremost in the minds of the hunters was the question of how they would know when the allocated number of whales had been killed, and what penalty would be imposed on a hunter who killed an extra whale. One of the officials doggedly maintained that anyone found exceeding the limit would be punished to the full extent of the law. With no effective method for the handful of biologists and the two RCMP officers to keep watch over the several foggy miles of fiord this was recognized as the bluff that it was. The sides eventually agreed on one hunter's suggestion that the Government staff set off smoke flares when they estimated that twenty-three whales had been killed. One watcher would be stationed on a high cliff with a pair of binoculars, and the remainder would patrol from a Zodiac and the RCMP canoe. The biologists also wished to have the measurements of every whale killed, and to take organ samples from each. The meeting closed with a word of caution from the biologists on the use of firearms, puzzling coming as it did from men who were toddlers when the majority of the hunters present were learning to use rifles.

The Inuit passed the remainder of the day and the entire night talking, making music, or playing cards, some playing for bullets, by the bright yellow glow of sibilant Coleman lanterns in the tents and boats. At around three the next morning the tentative halflight of dawn revealed once again a misty and tranquil world where the fog-softened lines of land, sky, and sea merged into a

gloomy pastel painted in shades of grey. From time to time the deep hissing sighs of surfacing belugas cut the still air, the arc of their smooth white backs highly visible against the gun-metal water.

No time was lost in taking down the boat cover and stowing the gear, loading the heavy calibre rifles and readying the harpoon and line. In short order we raised anchor, coaxed the unwilling twin outboards into life, and set off toward the head of the fiord. Peteroosie and Silasie, at once relaxed and intently observant, leaned against the deck and scrutinized the water. Within ten minutes Peteroosie had sighted a whale at a distance; a burst of speed brought the boat within shooting range. He and Silasie each fired one shot into the animal's side, whereupon the whale cut short its breath and disappeared beneath the waves. At this point the hunter must attempt to guess where the whale will reappear. Belugas are clever and will often choose a spot behind the boat and far out of range. When the hunter again sights the animal, he makes for it at top speed. If he decides he cannot get close enough before it dives again he fires a round into the air to frighten it down, thereby reducing its breathing time and forcing it to resurface prematurely and not too far away. A wounded whale spends as little time exposed as possible, exhaling underwater and sending great streams of bubbles to the surface. As our whale surfaced Silasie fired hitting the whale, which jerked its tail in pain, and became noticeably weaker and its movements more sluggish. Blood and blubber mixed with the exhaled breath, reddening the water and leaving an oily film on the surface. Eventually, when it could hardly muster the strength to dive, Peteroosie brought our boat alongside and hurled his harpoon into the enraged animal, which flapped about on the end of the line like a huge hooked fish. A final shot to the head dispatched it and the whale lay still on the surface.

As this hunt was overcrowded two or three boats would pursue each whale, and for nine hours a furious rattling of gunfire echoed and re-echoed down the length of the fiord with the ferocity of a small naval battle. Silasie said it was like a war on whales. At around noon three puffs of white smoke from flares operated by the officials signalled the end of the hunt and the clamour gradually ceased as those pursuing a wounded whale finished off their quarry.

* * *

The confusion surrounding both the imposition of a whaling quota and the regulations for the hunt on the hunters of Pangnirtung is an example of the disruption and uncertainty that rapid change, so typical of life in the north, can cause. Fundamental alterations in the character of Pangnirtung itself over the past twenty years, and subtle ones over the past five or so, were recurring themes in discussions with Inuit of my own generation. One evening I had a long talk with Johnny Mike, a twenty-eight year-old, with a wife and two children, who was working as a mechanic for the hamlet. His mind, he told me, still reels from the changes he has seen. When he reminisced about his childhood living in a qammaq, a wood-framed structure with a canvas covering, and recalled the days before snowmobiles it occurred to me that in my own society I would expect to hear similar discourses from a member of my parents' generation, not from a man three years my senior. Some insight into what is happening in the culture, he said, may be gained if one considers that for men like himself, holding full-time jobs, hunting, for thousands of years the principle occupation, had become only a weekend activity. Inuktitut, the complex and exacting language that has grown out of the people's relationship to the land, is losing its relevance to the new life, and Johnny and his wife find themselves speaking to their children partly in English. They wonder as the two little ones grow up in which language they will feel most comfortable.

It is adolescents who are on the leading edge of the process of change, and Pangnirtung has not been spared the crime and suicide among young people that has indicated serious problems in many communities. According to some, the school in Frobisher Bay to which students are sent after grade ten is one source of unease among young people. A large centralized facility, it extracts them from the physical and social environment in which they have been raised and places them in a system which teaches southern individualistic attitudes that have little place among traditional Inuit values of cooperation, which to a great extent are still essential to harmonious community life. The students are, in addition, prepared for what one Inuk called "a fantasy land" of job opportunities which simply do not exist in the settlements, to which most return at the termination of their studies. Having spent several years absorbing a concentration of foreign values they must suddenly return to a community to which

they have become less fitted, and where they feel less at ease.

Traditionally a source of wisdom and guidance, the older generation is undoubtedly still guardian of the former but has faltered in its ability to give guidance. The old people, like the minister at Pangnirtung, have little concept of the outside influences to which young people are exposed, and, unable to understand their behaviour, often resort to criticism which only engenders doubt and bitterness. There is a need, says Johnny, for the philosophy which has always formed the basis of Inuit society to be assimilated and used productively to help young people gain a firmer sense of their own identity and begin to solve their own problems. It is clear that what is in order is not centralization, but community level action. The current and very exciting initiative taken by Rhoda Innuksuk to establish community youth councils in the Baffin Region is an important example of this kind of thinking.

I was surprised to learn that the community, among whose residents I came to feel more welcome and cared for than any place I had ever visited, was apparently not as friendly a place as it had been five to seven years previously. I was told repeatedly that it was growing too large, and that old friendships were breaking down and affections were narrowing to focus more on family ties. People used to visit more. It seemed to me that people were casting anxious mental glances toward Frobisher Bay, twice the size of Pangnirtung, where the rule is to telephone before visiting instead of simply walking in the door. People seemed to feel that growth is harmful to the community and one young man suggested that the independence brought about by reliance on a wage income made a person less disposed to share and thus more guarded in his friendships.

I was asked many times during my stay if I liked Pangnirtung and if I would miss it after my departure. The answer to both questions was always yes, which I am sure was no surprise to those asking. Discussions about life there would frequently lead to talk of the beauty of the land, and what Johnny called the richness of the life. Pangnirtung, young people said, was "different"; they meant different from the south. No cars, they said, no dirt in the air or in the water, and a good climate

with no suffocating heat to endure in the summer. In the south a person living in a city of two million inhabitants might perhaps interact with thirty of them, keeping the door locked and scrutinizing each new arrival through a peephole before opening the door. In Pangnirtung, with one two-thousandth of that population, an Inuk might be related in some way to at least thirty people and know everyone in town, his actual acquaintances numbering many more than in a large city. And, because the pace of the community is slow and the doctrine of efficiency, with its voracious appetite for minutes and seconds, is not highly valued, there is plenty of time to go hunting, to join friends and go fishing at low tide, to learn a new song, or to visit. This invaluable resource, time, has now become scarce in the south.

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