

CAMBRIDGE BAY TO REPULSE BAY 1999

March 29, 1999

Took three days and over \$1000 to reach Cambridge Bay, should have been one day. Plane canceled the first day and the second day I could not reach Cambridge because of a blizzard. I traveled with three musk ox hunters going to Cambridge Bay. I spent an enjoyable evening with them in Yellowknife; they were egomaniacs. They talked excessively about their hunting exploits; they gave me their business cards with a picture of their many trophies on the backside. Twenty years ago I could have easily been one of them.

I stayed three nights in Cambridge to wait for the post office to open. My supplies were in the post office. The Inuit loaned me a torch to pine tar my Bonna skis, tin snips to fix my stovepipe and they taught me how to use my new Garmen GPS. They were very much interested in my proposed trip to Repulse Bay. All were aware that I had penetrated this far without serious mishap. The next native village, Gjoa Haven, is about 280 miles across 100s of miles of sea ice. One Inuk (singular for Inuit) informed me that it was impossible to make such a trip and said. "There is open water, fast currents, polar bears and ice piled on end. I would not try it with a snowmachine - take the airplane they go there three times a week." As usual I am committed to go, I can't turn back.

An old Inuk woman followed me out of the village. I detached myself from my loaded sled and skied back to talk to her. She was wearing a beautiful caribou fur that reached below her knees and she had caribou mukluks. She was carrying a small satchel and a rolled up caribou skin, which I assumed, was her sleeping bag. She probably has no real possessions, only memories and dreams. Her English was very poor but she quickly informed me that she was going with me. I couldn't take her, there's not enough room in my tent nor do I have enough food in my sled for both us. She was just as old and ugly as I was. I thought long and hard as she followed closely behind me for it's a long, lonely, cold journey ahead. She was kind of pretty but had a face very unlike the round faced Natives. She had crows feet around her eyes and her skinny cheekbones were like wings of a raven extending from her nose. Several times I skied back and tried to explain the situation to her. Like myself she was slightly demented and kept coming. The wind came up and I soon lost my companion in the swirling snow; without snowshoes she could not keep up. I am destined to be alone!

March 30

Everything goes wrong at the beginning. Tent poles too long, stovepipe won't fit into jack, food mixed up, forgot my Gore-Tex cover for my sleeping bag and it's cold and windy. I have a short memory, I have forgotten what it is like to cut butter with a hatchet, have my sleeping bag frozen to the tent wall, break icicles hanging from my nose before I am able to drink from bottle and to be constantly aware that fingers freeze in a few seconds when exposed. I use the deer skin mittens Kimmer made for me.

I am getting some wood for my wood stove, usually scrap lumber that has washed up on the beach. The wood is getting very scarce and there is none inland. Travel is slow maybe 10 miles per day. I am either bored, getting old or out of shape. The country is very dull, just low hills with many rocks protruding through the snow.

March 31, 1999

Saw 15 musk ox. They were 100 yards away then they moved up a ridge and stood in a row and watched me go by. Musk ox will form a circle allowing a man with a rifle to shoot one after another. Admiral Peary's expedition to the North Pole killed something like six hundred for food

I made an inventory of my travels in the Arctic before I left. My records show that I have now traveled 5000 miles in the Arctic, 4000 of them pulling a sled. It took 365 days to do the 5000 miles and 294 of these days were winter travel. To reach here I have traveled 1900 miles from Barrow in 154 days.

April 1, 1999

Today is a historic day in native villages located in the Northwest Territories. A new state within N.W.T. has been created, called Nunavut, which means "our land" in the Inuit language. Traditionally Natives have never owned land their philosophy was that the land owned you. The piece of land is larger than Alaska and California combined and has a total population of 26,000 people. As a political phenomena, Nunavut allows Inuit unprecedented level of self-determination within the Canadian Nation. With self-determination follows responsibility. Success will ultimately depend upon choosing the best of both worlds. These people already have major problems: crime, substance abuse, sexual predation and violence has taken a toll on the family.

The natives have such a extravagant life style: most villages have a school bus but few roads leading out of the village, 40 TV channels, and well built houses heated with expensive oil; but no apparent economic base.

And most are on the dole. Who will be the teachers, plumbers, and all the technicians it takes to run a village? The newly founded state of Nunavut needs time to grow; it will be worth the wait.

I wonder if the Canadian Government or the Natives realize this is April Fools Day. Sometimes I think that the Natives should go back to the land, maybe a harsh life but very satisfying. That's what I would do if in their situation but my thoughts may be jaded because I grew up in the Great Depression. We had no central heating, inside plumbing, store bought food, and a minimal amount of mechanical conveyances (horses were the mainstay) and I still have fond memories of that basic life style. We were very poor but didn't know it. Before the early 1960s, most of the Inuit of Nunavut lived on the land in outpost camps. Infant mortality rates were high, but the people were generally healthier and happier. In the mid-1960s schools and housing were constructed in the larger communities. This put an end to the nomadic way of life for an entire culture.

I saw at least a 100 musk ox today. From a distance they look like black snowballs and not constantly on the move like caribou. I walked up to one herd within a hundred yards. Our range cows in Wyoming were wilder than these critters. It is hard for me to justify them as game animals.

April 2, 1999

Stayed in tent, terrible blizzard conditions. There is nothing to gain by moving into a head wind. Out here life is like playing poker; "you have to know when to hold them and when to fold them".

April 3, 1999

Wind switched 180° so I decided to take advantage of a tail wind. Went out wrong side of tent into the wind and left door open. I was loading sled when out of the corner of my eye I saw the tent suddenly fill up with air and become air born. The fabric was torn and the tent started to tumble. I jumped on top of the tent saving it before it took to flight. I broke a pole. Now I have a trashed tent that cannot be repaired until I find a way to sew in the cold without the use of gloves.

At the end of the day I had to camp in a collapsed tent. Sleeping bag wet. The gas I bought for my stove is a low-grade fuel. Stove flares for three minutes before it becomes hot enough to generate. When I place a pot, the stove often catches on fire. It seems that I am making one mistake after another. Out here there is no room for mistakes.

I should have brought that old woman with me; she looks better with each passing day. She was carrying a snow knife and could have built a warm comfortable snow house. I feel sorry for the old woman for I know that she was born in a snow hut or a caribou skin tent. Her youth was a subsistence nomadic lifestyle. She wanted to go back to the land where life was not easy but a happy one and like myself she must have loved the memories of a simple basic life. I should have checked on her but didn't. Now I wonder if she made it back to the village because the visibility was almost zero and our tracks were blown shut. I was following a compass course away from the village.

I would turn back in a heartbeat if I had one of those "come and get me radios."

My pockets and, lining in my windproof bibs are filled with drifting snow and balls of ice. I cut the net lining out of the bibs. I have discovered that the net lining placed in wind pants and jackets by the manufactures do not work in an arctic environment. Balls of ice and snow collect in the lining.

Went to bed with all my clothes on including my mukluks.

April 4

I was buried during the night under a snowdrift. I am too old for this!

Today a beautiful day. There are bad days and there are good days, the bad days far outnumber the good. One good day compensates for the many bad days, the ones forthcoming and the ones I left behind.

I left the tundra and reached the sea ice. Sun out, can see for miles. I found a 3inch by 10inch by 10foot board on the beach. I built a fire in the wood stove that made it possible for me to repair the tent with needle and thread out in the open and without gloves.

I now sit in my underwear in the repaired tent. My wet sleeping bag, gloves, tent, and outer clothes are dry.

April 5

Reached Sturt Point, an abandoned DEW Site, where there is lots of wood. Will start across Queen Maud Gulf that is 150 miles of sea ice to King William Island. Jenny Lind, a small island, is 40 miles out. The island derived its name from the famous Swedish opera singer who performed for R.T. Barnum, over a hundred years ago. I wonder who the love starved explorer was who gave the island that name.

My fuel is of poor quality and I have only 8 liters, about two weeks supply. I don't have enough to reach King William Land. I will need help when I reach the island. There are no airplanes and I cannot expect surface traffic.

April 6

Head wind and whiteout conditions so stayed in tent where there is lots of wood and it's safe.

Froze a spot on my neck and one ear lobe - don't know where or when.

Reading "Ceremony", by Leslie Silko; a great book. Without books I cannot survive out here.

April 7, 1999

Passed through a labyrinth of blocks of 18inch thick blocks of sea ice, lying in all positions. It was reasonably easy to maneuver around them. Whiteout conditions all day.

April 8, 1999

Yesterday I was drowning in a sea of ice blocks because of poor visibility. Today a beautiful day I could easily find my way between the blocks.

April 9

This was another "one of those come and get me days." Cold air is flowing in the tent because of three holes 18 inches long, I found no scraps of wood after searching miles of beach on Jenny Lind Island and I lost my saw and had to retrace my steps to recover it.

A polar bear came into camp early this morning. I heard the crunching of snow than I saw a silhouette on the tent walls. I reacted immediately and let out a loud yell. The bear took off. I hurriedly dressed and went outside. I picked up a ski and my sled and drove the bear quite some distance from camp. The bear did not appear to be aggressive so I didn't need the ski or sled for protection. I decide the bear was no threat so I went into my tent to cook breakfast. It was then that I discovered the slash in the tent walls. The bear's claws had missed my sleeping bag by 4 inches. I don't know why I was not aware of the bear's entry into my tent. Perhaps the wind muffled all sound.

I cooked breakfast. The bear was 50 yards distant when I went out of the tent. Now I became concerned. Once again I drove the bear away but this time the bear appeared to be bold.

I had to wave my ski above my head, yell loudly and beat my ski on the sled. The bear did not want to leave and appeared to be more aggressive, it advanced away from me sideways with its head always keeping me in sight. Fear is a great motivator! I had to do something quick so I went back into the tent and boiled some frozen salmon strips. I imbedded 20 Advil and 10 Tylonal. I left the frozen morsels in my trail. The bear followed me for several hours then disappeared. The experience was unnerving. I now understand why Isabelle carried a \$200,000 policy for 40 years in the event that I should meet a accidental death or most likely just disappear.



Polar bears do jump through tents. This picture was taken in the Canadian Arctic. The bear bit the Native's foot off—he did survive but only because his friends killed the bear. The Native's many wounds are too harsh to show.

The “what ifs” in a threatening situation sometimes pass through my head. What if the drugs don't work, what if he follows me to camp, what if I become aggressive and attack the bear, what if the bear is hungry and becomes more aggressive. All my life I avoided the “what ifs” especially those made by friends, family and parents. The “what ifs” impede moving forward and prevent one from taking risks. The “what ifs” play themselves out everyday. I have never considered myself to be a thrill seeker; I would never bungee-jump.

I headed to the unmanned Jenny Lind Dew Line Site a place I can get into a warm shelter and repair my tent and get protection from the polar bear.

My Grandmother taught me The Lord's Prayer before I had entered school. We said it together every night when I visited her house. I have long forgotten the prayer but manage to say Thanks every night. I do not find it necessary to ask for forgiveness, good fortune or good health for I am very grateful to make it through just one more day.

April 10

Did not sleep all night. Yesterday I reached the Dew Line site, a hard 4 miles, located in the center of the island. The towers and buildings were caked in ice and snow. Even the No Trespassing signs were buried. The usual surveillance cameras that follow movements were encased in ice and dead. I shoveled out the drift of snow in front of the steel door and entered. A buzzer went off as I entered the steel room and a sign on the wall said that carbon monoxide would activate an alarm. I could smell fumes coming from the engine generator in the next room. The standard telephone hanging on the wall did not work for me because I didn't know the proper number to dial. I left very much disappointed.

Jenny Lind Island is flat and very unattractive. There is much game on the island. There are musk ox and caribou everywhere and they pay no attention to me. Fox follow me because I am pulling a fox delicatessen. None appear to be rabid but I am still wary of them since I was bit 3000 miles ago. There are many Arctic Hares must have seen 50 today.

April 11

Today I plunge 100 miles across the sea ice. I have 7 liters of fuel left and lots of wood that I salvaged from the Dew Line Site. The fuel is of such low grade that I have to use paper to get it ignited. I can get along without food but I need fuel to melt ice to make water. Without water I can survive for maybe six days. Will carry some wood and hope to get more when I pass Byrd Island. I hope a lot; I live on hope.

Magnetic north pole is in line with the geographic North Pole. This is the first time in my life that has occurred. I am now going 90° E of Magnetic N and true N. The compass needle takes a long time before it settles on magnetic north because of a weak directive force. The north magnetic pole is not far north from here and in 1831 it was located a few miles north of here.

Everything went well for several miles. Then I came to a wall of pack ice that extended as far as the eye could see. Large blocks of ice were standing on end as high as 10 feet. I penetrated the mass but could only make 2 miles a day. Soft snow several feet deep had filled in between the blocks of ice. It was a backbreaking job. I don't know why I should expect easy going when this area is well known for high winds. It is the same sea that crushed Franklin's two ships the *Terror* and *Erebus* and the eventual loss of two shiploads of men. I have to constantly remind myself that the forces of nature are not to be taken lightly.

It was one of those times when one should not confuse ambition with reality. I turned back.



A large hole in my tent, hundred miles of impossible sea ice conditions, and poor stove fuel made me turn back

April 12

I hate going back something I don't do very gracefully. With good sea ice I could have reached King William Land in a week and another week would put me in the village of Gjoa Haven. I so much wanted to cross the footsteps of the 127 men that perished on the western side of King William Land and at the same time I did not want to increase the number to 128. Very depressing to retrace my steps.

A blizzard rolled over the top of me. Built a block wall around my tent. Burnt both of my jackets on the wood stove while scrambling around the tent to tie the 45° internal braces.

My fingers that I froze in 1980 are no longer painful. For some reason the circulation is restored. The loss of my butt in the same accident does not bother me.

April 13

I camped within a mile of the camp with the polar bear. I quit thawing frozen fish strips on top of the stove because the strong odor attracts too many critters. My almonds and rum are now gone. Fish will be gone in a few more days. Threw away most of food away to lighten load. Must get to Cambridge Bay to decide what to do next.

April 14

Head wind all day; went 9 miles in 9 hours. Deep snowdrifts, holes and blocks of ice impede travel. Could not use skis because I am afraid they will break. At least 90 miles more to go to reach Cambridge Bay. I am very tired; don't know how I will make it.

The duct tape I used to patch bear holes blew off. I should have brought that old woman with me; she gets prettier and younger with each passing day. All the early explorers traveled with a native seamstress. That's what they were called in those days.

April 15

Beautiful day today, not a breath of air, almost stagnant. The snowdrifts are once again hard so I can use my skis.

A polar bear hunter, riding a snow machine, overtook me a rare occurrence. Jorgan Aitok was pulling a large sled loaded with camping equipment. I liked this Inuk at once for he is a wanderer and a hunter. There are only two of us out here. Jorgan offered to take me back to Cambridge Bay but first he had to go north to look for polar bears. He shot two in this area last year.

Went 10 easy miles camped in the warm sunshine.

April 16

Can make 2 miles an hour now with a light sled. Camped at Sturt Point, there are lots of boards. I will wait for Jorgan to pick me up. I need the rest.

April 17

A rest day.

April 18

Jorgan picked me up late afternoon and we had a quick cup of coffee together. It was a long cold ride back to Cambridge Bay. Jordan dropped me off at the hotel; I was cold and covered with hoarfrost. The women at the hotel secured me a plate of muffins and a fresh pot of coffee. I was so cold that I couldn't carry on a decent conversation. They knew all about my travels and that I had skied from Barrow and went from village to village.

April 19

I paid Jorgan \$100 and gave him my wood stove. I hated to part with the stove, finding wood is very doubtful to the east.

I flew to Gjoa Haven, located on the south end of King William Land. Another 200 miles to the east will put me in Pelly Bay and another 200 miles Repulse Bay. With a little rest I know that I can make it.

King William Land is a flat, ugly, complicated island. You need real sympathy for it and patience, to get out of it what's good.

In the north you are always close to history and King William Land has more history than any other island in the Arctic.

It is on this island that two men became very famous. Sir John Franklin failed in his quest for the North West Passage whereas Amundsen was successful. Franklin and Amundsen left a legacy of Bays, Islands and Glaciers with their names. In my quest for the North West Passage I have crossed their path many times but my legacy is only two thin lines in the snow that quickly disappear in the blowing snow.

Both men died in the Arctic in unmarked graves. I consider them very fortunate.

Franklin's party of 127 aboard the vessels *Erebus* and *Terror* was lost between 1845 and 1848. The fate of the two vessels was not determined until 1854. The vessels were crushed by ice and sunk on the north end of King William Land. Sir John Franklin and 16 others died before

the ships were abandoned. The remnant of 105 men moved south along the western side of King William Land.

The largest search in history began in 1848. The search for Sir John Franklin's party resulted in more discovery than Franklin could have accomplished in several lifetimes. Of the nine ships that left England in 1850 to probe the Arctic from the east, only one made it back that year. The rest were imprisoned in the ice. From there man hauling sledding parties fanned out in every direction except the right one. The Brits never seemed to learn – they did not believe in the use of dogs. To the south, Hudson Bay Traders had been using dogs, snowshoes and lighter sleds for decades. But the British didn't recognize any achievements of the local natives or Hudson Bay Traders.

The Inuit living on King William Island observed the death of a number of men. They were unable to help the survivors for they had their families to feed. The Inuit reported that the men pulled a wooden boat across the ice. At starvation cove they found thirty-five and a boat. At terror Bay the Inuit found a tent, and in it were thirty bodies. In later years evidence of cannibalism was found and possible botulism and lead poisoning weakened the survivors from canned food sealed with lead.

The search continued for a decade and more than fifty expeditions were mounted to search for the aging explorer. Funds were squandered; ships foundered, were lost or abandoned. Many more men died of mishap, starvation and scurvy. Franklin relics turned up often in the Arctic. Lady Franklin was very active in the search for her husband and she provided a vast sum of money. On her sixtieth birthday she wrote. "I cannot write down all the feelings that press upon me now as I think how fast the sands of life are ebbing away." At my age I can sympathize with her statement.

The great archipelago of islands and channels had been mapped and charted and the secret of the North West Passage had been unlocked. A new century would dawn before Amundsen was able to take a ship through the Arctic labyrinth from ocean to ocean. Franklin in death succeeded where he failed in life.

The Inuit of King William Island were also hungry, and there were times they too suffered from scurvy and even froze to death. But they were never wiped out even though they live a life in unimaginable territory.

I like Gjoa Haven much better than Cambridge. We eat in the kitchen at the hotel that I am staying in. Everybody is served the same. Lots of juices, pastries, coffee and fresh fruit are available at all times. Meals are cooked by the local Natives. I eat with a man that went to the North Pole with Steeger. He is pictured on the cover of National Geographic Magazine. Also the great grandson of Klinkenberger (George Atatahak) eats with us. George met me in 1993 at a DEW Line Site located near the Alaskan Canadian border. George was involved in making the site unmanned when I skied through. This second encounter gives me credibility.

April 21, 1999

I am following a snowmachine trail north to the village of Tallyhook; eventually it splits and goes east to Pelly Bay. It's like following a paved highway. I don't have to think where to go next, I don't wander, I don't plow over snow drifts, I don't fight *sastrugi*, it's great. A snowmachine goes by every 4 hours and they stop to check on me. The traffic is going to Tallyhook and none to Pelly Bay.

The Inuit in this region are known as the Netsilik and are friendlier than the Natives to the west. I have passed through many different branches of the Eskimo and find it difficult to call these Natives by their politically correct name. I have passed from the Nunamiuts to the Yupics to Inupiat to Invaliuts to Inuits and now to the Netsilik Inuits, all of which are Eskimos. It is so confusing to call the Natives anything else but Eskimos.

Amundsen's ship the Gjoa was held fast in the ice at Gjoa Haven for two winters. The ship could not sail westward until August 15, 1905. The crew (6 men) and Amundsen lived in the Native community. Amundsen dressed, ate, slept and even tried to think like his friends. He never saw a unhappy Native during the two years he stayed there. "A hungry Eskimo never looked unhappy. An ill Eskimo never looked unhappy. A tired Eskimo never looked unhappy." He wrote

Amundsen observed that the Eskimos did not have a sense of private ownership of their wives. They loved them and had children by them, but their principals of morality differed from those of the western world. The family feeling was deep and abiding, but the sense of belonging to a tribe and sharing was perhaps more important. "Because of this," Amundsen wrote, "I had an understanding why these kind people were never lonely as we know loneliness and a loneliness in the big cities of the world." I admire a culture that never experienced being unhappy or lonely.

Amundsen completed the North West Passage in 1906. He was the first to reach the South Pole in 1911. One of Amundsen biographers, wrote that "he never knew the companionship of a woman or the joy of children, the warmth of his own fireplace or the pleasure of normal living." During my stay in Gjoa Haven I heard rumors that there are descendants of his. He died in the Arctic in an unmarked grave in 1928. It is so easy to be trapped in physical pursuits and lose out on the real joys of living.

April 22

Trail turned eastward to Pelly Bay. It seems that it is much colder than it was farther west. The sun has power now and once I am in my tent everything dries off. I miss my wood stove – it's more fun camping with it.

April 23, 1999

A very bad day today, wind out of the east directly into my face. Have not seen anyone for two days. Following the snowmachine trail, intense cold. The cold is so gripping that it soaked right down to the marrow within my bones. Someday I am going to get a thermometer; Ice caked on my wolverine ruff. There are no islands or icebergs to aim for. It's like a treadmill on this endless sheet of white. All sense of progress is lost. The only interesting object was an open lead 2 feet wide, which stretched for miles.

After six hours I camped, lost trail due to blowing snow and whiteout conditions. I have 30 miles yet to reach Boothia Peninsula. I am getting stronger and more impatient with each passing day, so here I set in a rattling tent. At times like this I feel like a hibernating bear.

April, 24

A disappointing day – eight hours, 7.68 miles. The only object I saw all day was my ski tips. In the morning I depart with intense interest but hour after hour of breaking trail in soft snow in whiteout conditions my mood fluctuates to intense boredom. Last night a warm wind came in from the south bringing wet snow. From here I will be moving with a compass course indicated by my GPS.

I would like to get across Rasmussen Basin Soon. Knud Rasmussen was the first person to complete the North West Passage by dog team. He and his companions went from Greenland to Siberia in 1921-1924. Rasmussen was part Eskimo and was fluent in that language. All across the Arctic he recorded Eskimo intellectual and spiritual life. In the Eskimo culture girl children were often killed at birth. It was an economic necessity due to the stern conditions under which these people lived. Every hunter knows he has only a few years to compete then he must depend upon sons. It is a general custom that old folks no longer able to provide for themselves commit suicide by hanging or walking a long distance out on the sea ice in a blizzard. Eskimo women nurse babies 3 to 4 years a effective birth control. A girl baby would prevent the possibility of conceiving a son. Rasmussen observed infanticide at a village and recorded the following: "At Malerualik, in King William Land, I went through the whole settlement, inquiring of the women individually how many children they had born, and how many girls had been killed, noting carefully the names and numbers in each case. The result from the list before me as I write, gives, for eighteen marriages, a total of ninety-six children of which 38 were killed at once as girls." Rasmussen fell ill from eating rotten meat in Greenland in 1933 in the midst of another project— this time attempting to put Eskimo life on film. As he recovered from food poisoning, he came down with pneumonia. He died at 54, a national hero in Denmark.

April 25

If someone were to pay me a million dollars I would not do this. My pockets are filled with drifting snow even my compass is encased in ice. My white haired ivory troll is lost on my sled buried under snow. It is a world without a feature, an empty sky, an empty earth, front and back

Last night was horrible. Wind died down than returned with a vengeance. Wind came from all sides before it settled down and came from the east. I had to get out of bed and realign the tent with the wind. That was a mistake for I broke a pole so I collapsed the tent on my sleeping bag and went back to bed with all my wet clothes on. It was a long night, wet and very cold. It seems I am often on the ragged edge.

I am fortunate that I did not attempt going across Queen Maud Gulf. I had two tent fires trying to keep the gas stove going on the poor fuel I bought in Cambridge Bay. I used toilet paper to ignite the gas and once I got the stove going it would often catch on fire. I could easily be lying out there, frozen in my sleeping bag in side my tent. Life is fragile, nobody here just me. I have to be focused just to maintain control.

April 26

Great day, bright and sunny. Found trail at noon. Finished crossing Rasmussen Basin and now will cross Boothia Peninsula, a low mountain range. The granite hills are only 1200 feet high

Stopped early to sew the bear holes up again, repair ski polls and tent polls.

Threw away extra gas and food to lighten load so I can travel faster. Colin Fletcher, a well-known backpacker, promulgated the Law of Inverse Appreciation. "The less there is between you and the environment, the more you appreciate that environment." I have disdain for stuff I never use or don't need; like bathrobes, pajamas and slippers.

I crossed the beach in Shepherd Bay this afternoon and I immediately went looking for wood that I cannot use. I found nothing after searching for an hour. Old habits don't die easily. All night long I have one continuous dream. Last night a falcon landed on my upright thumb. It had only one talon imbedded in my extended thumb. When I tried to get rid of it pressed deeper. I could feel the pain in my sleep.

April 27

Snowed last night covering up my trail. Stayed in camp all day to rest and give the new snow a chance to set up in the wind.

I don't see how anyone ever survived in this land it is so barren yet it has been crossed many times by Natives and explorers. There are no seals, no fox, no caribou, no rabbits and no musk ox.

No one including American newspapers mentioned Natives. They never received credit for the part they played throughout the age of exploration in sustaining the polar hero.

A map of the Arctic has gulfs, bays, rivers, and many other geographic features named after Arctic heroes of the 1700s, 1800s, and 1900s. The press and magazines followed the exploits of these men with a good deal more enthusiasm than that which they follow the exploits of space travelers. Personal accounts of arctic voyages and journeys line the shelves of libraries and bookstores. Those who stay at home can identify themselves with arctic travelers for they no longer can truly identify themselves with the mechanical heroes of modern times. Most of the great tales of human venturing into the Arctic are legion and now more and more of these out of print books are being published as second edition books. My legacy is two thin lines left in the snow which will soon be lost in drifting snow.

The modern day arctic adventure surrounds himself with a radio shack (GPS, satellite telephone, solar panel to power his Internet connection and a "come and get me radio") also he has corporate sponsors to the tune of 100s thousands of dollars. It's the modern age that's overspecialized. The focus is in stuff rather than on the place they are visiting. These modern day adventures are no different than space men. They do not have the stature of heroes such as Rasmussen, Amundsen, Franklin, Stefansson or Jenness. In retrospect it seems that the future is not what it should be—and the past seems to be gaining on us.

April 28

Made 16 miles today. Tomorrow I start over hills. It is exciting to be going through these mountains for I am bored traveling on sea ice and flat tundra.



Spring time makes a brownish haze do to the warmer temperatures and longer daylight hours.

Only my tent floor and sleeping pad separate me from ice and hard snow. I sleep soundly for 10 hours and have fun dreams. Put me in a warm room and I don't sleep well and never have any dreams.

It is still very cold, wind and snow, spring has not appeared.

April 29

Made 16 miles today. Easy country to travel in. Lots of hard packed snow, no snowdrifts or sastrugi. The best I have seen in the arctic.

I am now seeing a few caribou in small bunches of 2 or 3 moving north. Saw one wolf track today. I have now traveled thousands of miles along the Arctic Coast of Canada and Alaska and I have yet to see more than one wolf or one wolf track. Early explorers tell of wolves howling all night and of wolf packs that would follow them from camp to camp scavenging for food. Sled dogs had to be watched closely because wolves kill them while they were tethered. There are more wolves within 15 miles of Anchorage than in the Arctic. Just a year ago I was 15 miles from Anchorage at the Raven Cabin with Sam and Quillpie (Kimmer's dogs). At early morning light a pack of wolves came through. Sam and Quillpie were killed immediately. I recovered the bodies shortly after the accident but the bears moved in the next night and consumed the bodies. Long ago I made a vow to make amends for all my dogs that have died a tragic death. I have had a hard time paying back the debt I owe to the dog world.

April 30

It took me less than two hours to go through the mountain pass. It's a pass that has been used for centuries by the Natives and explorers. I find it exciting to follow in their footsteps, even

though I know that I am not the first to do so. This pass was just as thrilling to pass through as the many Himalayan 17,000 foot plus passes I have crossed in Zanscar, Ladakh, Nepal and Tibet.

I am able to travel great distances each day for I am strong and my sled is almost empty. I find my physical strength has not diminished very much with old age. But I am concerned if I can always handle the mental part of the Arctic. There are some days that become very testy and that is where the mental process comes into play. Sometimes I am nonchalant about an incident that should require focus. Maybe that's good and may be not so good. I vacillate from extreme caution to carelessness. If I were cautious I would not be out here but home with my peer group having heart attacks and prostrate operations.

May 1, 1999

Terrible cold last night so I left just as the sun was coming up. There was a halo around the sun just as appeared over the bare hills. I saw 10 caribou silhouetted within the halo. It was spooky to see them against such a somber background. They angled down off the skyline and dissolved into the blowing snow. I wanted a photograph but my camera does not work in this cold.

I am now traveling on a 20-mile long linear lake (Simpson Lake) sandwiched in between bare wind swept mountains. I like these mountains that I am passing through. I don't feel so naked as I do out on the sea ice. I can camp out of the wind behind hills or in creek bottoms. I feel much safer.

I can barely eat my butter because it is so rancid after being stored for a month in a warm post office at Gjoa Haven. I am losing weight, I can tell because it is harder to stay warm.

May 2

Very beautiful, hot and sunny, ground squirrels out.

Very quiet today not a breath of fresh air. I stood 5 minutes in my ski tracks hoping to hear some sound; nothing but overpowering silence. I stopped another time to listen and I heard the crunching noise of caribou marching single file to the north. They were too far away to see but close enough to hear. Very few people have ever stood in one spot and listened to the quiet—but I have!

This afternoon I met a young Netsilik Inuit out hunting caribou. Philippe Alakannuark was from Pelly bay. We talked for a few minutes and he departed for Simpson Lake. I made camp and late afternoon Philippe showed up with 2 caribou on his sled. We had a cup of tea together in the warm afternoon sunshine. I liked this Inuk. I noticed he carried a full suit of caribou clothing on his sled. Philippe proudly displayed his beautiful crafted fur clothing and *kamaks* (mukluks). He also showed me his snow knife to make snow houses with. He says everybody carries skin clothing and a snow knife in case a blizzard comes up and they become stranded out here. The young Inuk wanted to give me a caribou, which I did refuse. But he did give me three loaves of banock bread with raisins and all the butter he had. I gave him a sack of almonds that he never ate before. Philippe made the trip once to Gjoa Haven and he informed me that it was 200 miles between the two villages by snowmachine. As he left he said. "Nobody knows you are coming I will tell everyone in the village."

May 3

I am glad that I had a snow machine trail to follow to Pelly bay. Philippe's trail did not go straight but went around bare rounded hills, up ridges, down gullies and across lakes. I never knew for sure where I was going nor did I care for I just blindly followed the trail.

Camped on sea ice in Pelly Bay, it is 20 more miles to the village.

May 4

I am getting tired could not reach the village. I need several days of rest and rich food loaded with calories.

Met three Inuit on snow machines going to the long lake, Simpson Lake. Each had two barrels of aviation gas on their sleds to be used next summer to fuel helicopter doing mineral exploration. Like Phillippe all of them had a full suit of caribou clothing and a snow knife. Their caribou clothing does not have pockets. I have learned the hard way that pockets don't work in the Arctic; they fill up with drifting snow. They knew who I was; they heard about me on the radio.

I have traveled thousands of miles through the Arctic; from the Inupiat to the Nunamiut to the Athabaskan Indians to the Yupik back to the Inupiat to the Inuvialuit and finally to the Inuit. The Netsilik Inuit are the only Natives I have seen with the traditional furs and a snow knife

The sea ice popped and snapped all night, the tent even shook. Spring has finally arrived.

I carry a lot of reference books that tell of exploits made by explorers in this region. Just finished reading Thierry Mallet's Vignettes of a Dying Land, 1925-29. He tells of following a starving tribe of Inland Eskimos across the Barren Lands located just south of here. I consider his way with words and descriptions are of the best. The following is a portion of his writing that moved me so much:

"The little girl of twelve, who managed to keep up until the very end because her mother probably had fed her with hidden scraps before she herself fell dead on the trail. The little girl who saw the other members of the tribe sink one by one and die on the frozen land.

The little girl left alone, hundreds of miles from anywhere, in a strange desert of ice and snow, with nothing but a sense of direction inherited from the old chief. The little girl who never thought of giving in, even then, but who grasped the last rifle and went on and on, blindly, in the deathly Arctic winter – on and on - true to the right direction followed by her elders – on and on with the unflinching courage of her race, until death, at last, mercifully struck her down."

Mallet found all 17 bodies of the tribe scattered across the tundra. The little girl was the last to die.

May 5

Pelly Bay, a village of 500, is very picturesque being surrounded by bare round granite hills on three sides and the ocean on one.

I arrived in the village very early in the morning. An old villager who could not speak much English escorted me to the hotel. I spent two nights and \$500 in Pelly bay. It was long enough to get some rest and overload on rich food. They fed me all I could eat.

The entire village was interested in my walk from Alaska. The older people who just came off the land could speak little English would come to the hotel with a interpreter. They wanted to know how long it took me to reach Pelly Bay, how old I was, my marital status and did I really come from Alaska. One very old man stopped me in the grocery store; he could not speak a word of English. He pinned the new flag of Nunavut on me. I was moved by this brief sincere ceremony.

Bill Lyall who I met at the hotel is a representative of the new Nunavut government. He was very interested in the fact that I don't smoke, am elderly and can travel great distances across an area that that Natives can no longer do without a snowmachine. He wants to encourage his people to stop smoking, just about all of them smoke cigarettes. He told me that the Inuit are rapidly dying of lung cancer. Bill offered me his home to stay in if I ever go back to Cambridge Bay.

Philippe brought me three loaves of freshly baked banock for my trip south. He would like some more almonds. I will send him some; he is such a nice man.

I browsed through a telephone book that had names and telephone numbers of Inuit in all the villages of the Canadian Arctic. I was surprised to find four Paneaks in four different villages. Paneak is the only Native name that I have discovered that spans thousands of miles across the Arctic beginning in Anaktuvuk Pass. It may support the theory that the Natives did migrate from west to east. Rosey Paneak, my Anaktuvuk friend does have relatives in Paulatuk. I discovered them when I passed through that village several years ago.

May 8, 1999

These Natives in eastern Canada are so much different then those to the west. I have passed through dozens of villages and never have I received the attention that the Netsilik Natives have given to me. A small crowd gathered to see me off.

I wanted to go straight across the mountains to Repulse Bay but the locals advised me to follow the longer trail that goes around the mountains. The trail is 200 miles long and used daily by visiting families going back and forth on snow machines pulling large sleds between the two villages. They are 3 to 5 feet wide and 20 feet long and many have a elaborate frame shelters

covered with canvass. The family rides out of the wind in the enclosure on top of a number of foam mattresses. The women and kids are dressed in caribou fur, none of their fur clothing has pockets. Traditionally Natives have never had pockets for a good reason they just fill up with blowing snow. They carry a complete outfit for camping and a snow knife to build a shelter. There is no garbage of any kind that litters the trail, which is remarkable considering the amount of traffic it gets.

May 9

I am such an oddity that everybody stops and talks to me. An Inuk just stopped to look at my tent. The tent was banked up with snow and I was setting inside nice and warm and out of the wind. The Inuk stuck his head in the tent door came up with the most astounding statement, which he readily related to me. "We are too dumb to figure out something like that." Then he looked over at his snowmachine and said. "We are a slave to those things." Then he went on to tell me about his track rig that is stranded on the sea ice in Committee Bay. "It will go out with the sea ice in three weeks if the parts don't arrive soon." The trail goes right by it and you are welcomed to camp in it out of the wind."

I am traveling up the Kellett River that eventually goes around the higher mountains. There are many fish nets strung under the ice between two holes to catch arctic char. I don't know how they string the net between holes chopped into the ice that are a 100 feet apart. There are half -a-dozen plywood huts scattered along the river.

May 11

I don't travel many hours because it is so easy to make 20 miles. Fourteen sleds went by today. Three sleds were loaded with empty 55gallon drums to mark the trail. Last winter a Native got lost, ran out of gas and started walking and froze his feet which had to be amputated. I guess he didn't have the caribou clothing, kamucks or snow knife. One of the drivers informed me that not many in this area use a GPS. He said that his people are not familiar enough with numbers to use one.

Another Inuk stopped to let his family stretch their legs. He told me that spring is about three weeks late. He also told me that it is 350 kilometers between the two villages, which comes to 210 miles.



May 12

The Natives tell me that the trail I am on now was created for snowmachines pulling heavy loads. The ancients cut across the mountains with their dog teams because it was shorter.

Bad day today but I made over 20 miles because of a tale wind. Had a very hard time setting up tent even after I built a large snow block wall.

While setting up my tent I saw a weasel using the wind to travel. The weasel was traveling 35 miles per hour with the wind by bouncing off the hard packed snow then becoming air borne. Every time it landed on the hard snow it would leap into the air to catch the wind again.

May 13

I have been entertaining the idea of coming back next spring and finishing the 200 miles that I missed. The thought has plagued me for a long time. It would cost \$4000 and take 30 days. After last night - no way! The wind changed direction about 30° that made my snow block wall redundant. I had to sleep with all my clothes and mukluks on just in case the tent started to fall apart. My tent has been severely damaged by the wind and the polar bear; I can no longer trust it in a blow. I managed to escape in the morning in a lull.

Reached Committee Bay, wind pushed me all the way. Stopped to have lunch with a family. It seems strange to have a picnic with a family out of the wind behind a large slab of sea ice that had been pushed up on shore. They pull out their two-burner stove and make tea and delicious hot soup made of noodles and arctic char. These people are so generous; everyone stops and wants to haul me to Repulse Bay. They tell me that spring is three weeks late but I find that the snow is getting soft and I will have to travel at night.

May 14

I think I missed mother's day. My mother is 94 and in a full care nursing home. She like most of the inmates there are waiting and wanting to die. Life is no fun anymore they have lived too long. I would rather die five years prematurely than 5 weeks too late and end up in a place where my mother is.

About seven sleds went by today. The 1000-foot hills that parallel Committee Bay are now brown. The Natives tell me there will be no more visiting between villages in two more weeks.

May 15

I sleep during the warmer part of the day. I am out of place in this land of snow machines. Everyone stops and wakes me up to just talk and look inside my tent. They pull up in front of my tent and women and children pile out of their shelter. They are dressed in their finest furs. One little girl was dressed in unborn caribou fur that she proudly displayed for me. Her brother wore polar bear fur.

May 16

The dead seal lay next to the trail, only the guts and fat remained. It had been shot near its hole through the sea ice. In the old days the guts would have been fed to the sled dogs and the fat used in the lamps.

I travel over 20 miles each day. It seems that the Native women that go by carry a well-stocked grocery store. I trade my extra Canadian spam for pilot biscuits or anything else I might need. The label on the Canadian spam says the product is made of pork and parts thereof. One woman saw that the heels on my mukluks were worn through and the socks were protruding. Right there and then she wanted to take off her oversize boots and give them to me. Everyone wants to give me a ride. They ask me the same questions over and over.

"How long did it take you to get here?"

"Are you okay?"

"Where did you start from?"

"How many miles a day do you go?"

"Do you want anything?"

"Are you writing a book?"

"Do you have a gun?"

"How old are you?"

"Are you married?"

“Where is your radio”

My clothes have many holes, my mukluks have holes big enough to expose socks, my white hair is long and scraggly my beard is unkempt and my nose has an ugly scab. And they still want to know my marital status.

May 17

I left last night just as the sun was setting, two hours later it was back again. Today I stepped off the ice onto land (Rae Isthmus). If there ever was a man who stood in perfect contrast to Franklin and the other naval explorers, it was John Rae. Rae grew up in Scotland, climbing mountains, fishing and relishing every opportunity to be outdoors and he studied medicine at Edinburgh. It was said that he could walk on snowshoes, 100 miles in two days. In 1845 John Rae was 32 years old and had worked for the Hudson Bay Company. His traveling kit consisted of Inuit snow goggles, his gun, a few instruments---a watch, chronometer, telescope, octant—and a sewing kit to repair his clothing. He also carried the tools necessary to build an igloo and to occupy his mind, two books: the works of Shakespeare in one volume and a book of religious poetry. He was one of the first non-native explorers to use indigenous mode of travel that is the use of dogs and killing game as he traveled which enabled him to map thousands of miles of coastline. John Rae was my hero of the Arctic; unlike Sir John Franklin and Dr. Richardson he killed his own animals for survival. Whereas Dr. Richardson and Franklin refused to kill game, they had native hunters do it. In 1854 Rae met a Native at Pelly Bay who gave him a second-hand report of the fate of the men who escaped the ships, *Erebus* and *Terror*. Inuit families had spotted about 40 white men on King William Island, travelling south and dragging a boat and sledges behind them. And later in the season they found their bodies. The Inuit also reported that there was evidence of cannibalism because of the mutilated bodies. Rae took to England a medal, silver plate, silver spoons and forks, and other items bearing the crests of various members of the Franklin party. The mysterious fate of the Franklin was all but confirmed. A great many people in England did not want to believe Rae; since civilized subjects of the King were not capable of resorting to cannibalism. They attributed the mutilations to wild beasts and suggested that the Natives killed the men. Rae was pilloried in public. Rae was never granted a knighthood, as had many of his lesser contemporaries.

My map across Rae Isthmus indicate I would be crossing a flat frozen tundra; however there are a series of granite hills 500 to 700 feet high which had been rubbed bare by glaciers. The trail follows a thin, narrow thread of snow and frozen lakes sandwiched in between the ridges of granite. It would be very difficult if not impossible to go straight across country because of the steep and bare terrain. The trail winds in and out of the many granite hills.

The 200mile section between Pelly Bay and Repulse Bay is my most interesting and beautiful stretch in Canada.

Camped under a granite cliff to get out of the wind. There are 20 caribou grazing next to camp. They are white and not much bigger than the arctic hares I often see.

May 18

I have been out 49 days since leaving Cambridge Bay and I have skied 550 miles. It takes patience to endure!

Yesterday I lost the trail because of blowing snow and a whiteout. This morning some Natives spotted me in field glasses floundering in deep snow miles off of the trail. They went out of their way to point me back to the trail. The sun came out opening up valleys and mountains – a most beautiful sight.

A big blow came up in the after noon while I was sleeping. I had to go to bed with all my clothes on for safety.

An older Native on his way to Repulse stopped and woke me up for he was concerned about my welfare. He was covered with blowing snow. Like most of the older people he could speak little English. I don't know how these people are able to follow a winding trail in a big blow on a fast moving snow machine. Big blows are common that's why there are so many igloos and huts along the trail. I never move into them because it is more comfortable in my tent.

May 19

I will be in Repulse Bay tomorrow still making over 20 miles a day. Everybody stops to talk to me, they wake me up. One man stopped to just tell me that his mother and father were actors in Never Cry Wolf



May 20

My last day in the Arctic is a beautiful, warm, calm Sunday morning. The trail is squeezed between narrow granite knife like ridges. Small bands of caribou crossed in front of me, a fox barked nearby on a bare ridge top, and baby arctic hares were scrambling in front of me. I will miss the Arctic; I thrive on difficult goals.

I went to the hotel and I was quickly informed that I pay nothing for food or lodging. I was very embarrassed. Mary who I had met on the trail cooked me a huge breakfast. I took a shower and washed my smelly worn out clothes.

Most of the Natives have seen me at various times between here and Pelly Bay. They believe that my trip from Gjoa Haven is a big accomplishment and the fact that I did come from Barrow makes it even more credible. Barrow is 2600 miles behind me and Unalakleet another 900 miles south and Nuiqsut another 1100 miles north. I have reached the north end of Hudson Bay, which is on the Atlantic side, I cannot go east because of open water, and I can only go north or south. I have reached my goal with the exception of the 200 miles I have left behind. That 200 miles will haunt me forever but I am getting too old and the monetary costs are much. I will walk away from the Arctic with a profound sense of accomplishment but my life's greatest accomplishment is the fact that I stayed alive. But there are many times that just plain luck rather than skill has made all of this possible.

Repulse Bay is the last village to be established in Canada. The people came off the land in 1956 to live in the village. That explains why the older Inuit speak very little English. The village is on the Arctic Circle. The last time I crossed the Arctic Circle on skis was at Kotzebue in 1989. It was then that I was going north on a 900mile journey between Unalakleet and Barrow.

Mary spent the entire morning making cake and cookies and then she invited the village for cake and coffee. I shook hands with everyone at the party. I was going to abandon my sled in the village but now I can't because everyone put their name or a X on my sled. Now I have to take the sled back with me. I was overwhelmed by all the attention.

May 21

Had to stay another day to catch a airplane out. I was invited to the school to talk to the students. Everyone takes off their shoes at the front door. All the hotels in Canada have this requirement.

There is no soil in Repulse Bay just granite. All the bodies in the graveyard are buried with rocks piled on top. There are about 400 people in this village which is modern like the others in Canada.

One Inuit woman was just killed south of here by a polar bear and her two companions were seriously mauled. I do not consider them to be a serious threat but they are curious.

I called home and found that I have another 18-day trip down the Grand Canyon as a boatman beginning in several weeks. I also have another 18-day trip next October and I had one last October. This makes a total of seven trips so life does not become dull.

Adamie Paneak 867-979-5739, Igaluit

Barbara Paneak 867 924-6074 and Loseosie Paneak 867-924-6510, Clyde River

Cindy Paneaq 867-934-8334, Igloolik

I went back and completed the section 200 mile section the year after.