

Pt. Hope Eskimo Woman Is Whaling Captain

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POINT HOPE—Early this spring Mrs. Ruth Nash, housekeeper and mother of seven, became a whaling captain. She comes from a long line of whalers but it's not a usual job for a woman. Especially when her children insist she come home and cook supper every night.

"It was busy but I enjoyed it. I just like to watch the whales come in and the ducks. It beats staying home," she said.

Mrs. Nash's mother was once whaling captain but in name only. She inherited the gear but stayed home and let someone else run the operation.

Not so, Mrs. Nash. When her husband, Bernard, had to leave the village for a construction job, she took over his responsibility; camping on the ice to cook for his eight man crew, overseeing three helpers and her oldest son who handled the gear.

"I never knew much about whaling," she admits. "When I was young a girl friend and I went out in a boat but we got scared when they harpooned the whale. I had gone before to cook on the ice, though."

The job is not an easy one. It means cooking over a Coleman or Eskimo stove with coal and seal oil at temperatures well below zero. The menu includes canned foods, ogrook, seal, cereals, tea and doughnuts when the weather is warm enough

for deep fat frying.

Mrs. Nash's doughnut recipe is an old one and we asked her if we could print it. Here it is under its Eskimo title:

UGRUKOAKTUK (Roll cooked with oil)

3 packages of dry yeast
1 can evaporated milk
2 tablespoons salt
1 cup sugar
5 tablespoons shortening
1 cup raisins
flour

Melt lard in skillet. Mix yeast with milk and let stand in a warm place about five minutes. Mix with rest of ingredients. Stir in enough flour to make workable dough. Shape like traditional doughnut or like a biscuit with several finger sized holes punched in it. Fry in deep hot fat.

Mrs. Nash's grandmother used whale or seal oil instead of lard. "It makes them better," she maintains. "Whale oil doughnuts are the best."

In addition to cooking crews must be provided with warm clothes, fresh socks and caribou skins for their camp on the ice. They stay there as long as three weeks at a time, although Mrs. Nash went home each night to tend to her youngsters.

Her crew didn't get a whale this year but there's no hard feelings. Only five out of 12 crews on the ice got whales and the Nash team did get Beluga, seals, duck and crab.

So, no complaints. If Bernard Nash has to be out of the village next year, the same crew will sign on with Mrs. Nash as his replacement. She's willing to take the assignment again.

Women's Liberation fans will be sorry to learn, however, that she doesn't consider her takeover of a man's job all that important.

"I like being a woman, myself," she concluded.



CAPTAIN AND SON—Mrs. Ruth Nash takes a summer vacation from her duties as whaling captain to enjoy her family. Here she shares a joke with her youngest, Jack, aged six. She took on the assignment of whaling captain when her husband, Bernard, was called away this spring on a construction job.