

# GUEST EDITORIAL

He stood in District Court yesterday, his black hair touched gray by the years, brown face somehow out of place in the sea of white, and on his face a look of bewilderment—or was that resignation?

His large, rough hands trembled slightly. Hands of another time. Hands made to hold a harpoon, a knife, a trap. Hands made to carve to work to guide a dog team. Hands that now—too often—held a bottle.

Downcast eyes, there in District Court yesterday. Eyes made for looking toward a far horizon, made for looking clear out over the edge of the world, made for spotting a lumbering polar bear, a spouting whale, eyes made for reflecting a midnight sun, eyes to see forever. And now red and watery, they looked across the sterile courtroom to where a man wearing a gloomy black robe spoke of lawyers, and constitutional rights and jails—spoke of all this in the flowing syllables of a language he only partly understood.

The robed man kept asking if he understood. The man kept nodding. He understood the escape of booze, and he understood courtrooms and judges and he understood jails.

And he understood there would be another incident and another courtroom and another judge and another jail. And he didn't know when it would end—nor did he care.

He belonged in another time, another place and he knew it. And there was a time he screamed out in the anguish he experienced in the here and now, screamed out and no one heard him. Screamed out and the frustration drove him to the very brink of insanity and a firm grasp on his bottle was all that kept him from slipping over the edge, all that made his existence tolerable.

And the robed man pondered. How and for how long do you lock up a lost soul. Five days, he thought. "Five days," he said, aloud.

—Jerry Fears  
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