

Gambell news

(c) 1976 By Grace Slwooko

Here in Gambell what we do for living mostly is to carve ivory and always out seal hunting. What we have for meat is seal, always that, although we do other things like getting jobs through applications you fill out we still hunt and carve ivory. During September and October men like to go five to fifteen miles out

and watch from the shore and points. This time of the year, they get spotted seals mostly. They also go to the lagoons to hunt those seals. They like to make pokes, from those seals. They like to make garments for winter, too from those seal skins. It is very hard work making pokes, because the seals are very heavy weighing around 200 lbs, but when a person knows how, he or she can do it and inflate a nice big poke for a float in boat huntings.

When ever a man comes home with a seal, any body can come and ask if there is piece for the dinner. The meat is happily shared by any one, always.

There also is digging for ivory. In the old villages there is ivory found always, so people like to dig, some are good in finding even large tusks fancy work and idols. Some of us are pretty poor in digging, I get tired real easy and would give up before I find too much, but once in a while, I find some, like one time I found an ivory needle what my ancestors use to sew skins with, how ever they make a tiny hole for an eye in that needle I don't understand. Then one time I found a little weapon, a tiny ivory harpoon about 1½ inches

long with very sharp point and clutches. It may have been for the mice or some small animals. So nobody can tell when a person can find a very costly ivory work, when they dig. So lots of people like to dig, especially before the freeze up. According to my grandmother and others, there is a chest of trade beads buried some place near the foot of the mountain, no one has found yet. As a child I use to run to every bump at the place near the foot of the mountain when we are on the trip home from picking. As my grandmother use to say to us, when we come there, "One of those is, where the chest of beads. You can hear, that, it is hollow when you jump on it." It was the treasure of the daughter of some well-to-do man, but it was buried here during the times when the people had to run to the mountain. When the enemy come or when the floods are causing the people of this village to run away, they usually run to the mountain, so it was in times like this, the chest was buried. Whether to hear a hollow place or not my playmates and I use to run to every mount or a heap of earth and jumped on them, and would go on. However, the

mounts are not seen anymore, a large company had some constructions there one time, the mounts are all flatened, so we don't know where the chest is any more.

The mountain really stands up so steep and high, nice neat place with ancient camps and historical places, with 300 ft. at the highest peak and it is on the right hand side of great triangle shaped set up of rocks. And from the foot of this hill is a mile of gravel and little earth to the village and it is very close to the sea, the village is. People lived there for centuries probably averaging 300 in population at the times. Now of course it is a place with schools, stores and other things like new housing. There are 30 new homes a few acres away from the village along the lake. More than 20 families have moved in to the new homes although they are not quite done yet. The running water is not done yet. Like always people are excited about new homes. A few of my kids and I moved in on Oct. 6, 1976. It is a pleasant place with a scenery near the mountain, but it is windier. It is October 27, 1976 now, for a few days the wind has been blowing from

north west so strong maybe more than 50 knots. At the same time the electricity went off, somebody said that some one was getting his lights fixed. Oh it was so cold at the new housing that some of us were forced to move back to the houses we had at the old village. There should be a bright hope with a storm, as there usually is the time of things found at the store.

The wind from north west has been blowing so hard and long that, the ice even is here so soon. Maybe the wind was more than 50 miles an hour and a week long. And with this storm, the new comers are arriving! Winfred James, Sr. got 2 polar bears yesterday not far from the village. Walter Slwooko got a walrus and lost it, some one found it.