



HELPED REVIVE VILLAGE—Martin Olson played an important role in reestablishing his village of Golovin that all but died away in the middle 1950's. He established a needed village store, supply barge service and an air chartering service of his own. Olson is shown making an appeal to the Nome Employment Development Conference for a larger airport at his village. The present airstrip is only 2,700 feet long which cannot be lengthened because it is built on a spit. "And reindeer—the product is there and all we need is a way to move it," Olson said to the conference and his interviewer.

—Photo by TIMES EDITOR

Village that All But Died Struggles Back

Back in 1950's, the little village of Golovin on Norton Sound practically died on the vine. Today, the tiny settlement is struggling back to life and this time, there

seems to be a perceptible glimmer of hope of a sustaining life in its future.

The resurgent effort of the little village is largely due to a youngish Eskimo man, Martin Olson, a local boy who grew up to be a bush pilot and who now operates his own charter flying service and a general store.

He also operates a barge service in summer and hauls groceries, fuel and other materials that supply his village and villages of White Mountain, Elim and Shaktoolik.

SUPPLY BASE

Golovin was a busy little town at the turn of the century when it served as a base of supply for busy gold miners up the Neukluk River at Council.

Sometime during that time, a man by the name of John Dexter settled there and started a trading store. He married an Eskimo woman and they raised John, Jr., Molly and Flora. Dexter died several years ago an old, old man.

"When old John died, the village practically died with him," said Martin Olson. Some families began to move to White Mountain, some moved to Nome and some to Shaktoolik."

Olson said the reason was that there was no longer a store in the village.

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Village Comes Back . . .

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"At first, the villagers went upriver to White Mountain to shop for groceries, a trip of about 28 miles one way and 28 miles back. It was a costly way of shopping so they finally decided to move."

He said that three or four families stayed on and among them was the Sigfried Augongak family and the Ahmaktooliks. Sigfried Augongak is a reindeer herd owner of about 14,000 or 15,000 head.

SCHOOL CLOSES

Then in 1955, the exodus of the villagers caused the Bureau of Indian Affairs school to close down because of inadequate number of pupils.

"We stayed one winter without a school," said Olson.

Although the former residents of the village stayed away in winter, many of them kept coming back during the summer to camp and fish.

"I think they missed their old village," Martin said.

Noting this, Martin Olson one day told some of his people, "I'll try to get a store going if you would move back."

The simple but a cautiously hopeful statement proved to be the needed impetus and the villagers began to come back family by family.

"Now we're up to a hundred people in Golovin—about the same number who lived there before the people started moving away," said Olson, smiling. "BIA was also very helpful. They told us that if enough people came back to Golovin, they would reopen the school, and they did."

Martin said it was just like some people would say, "It was a hard struggle, and I started on a shoestring but we have a small general store going now."

BUSH PILOT

Prior to moving to Golovin himself, Martin Olson was a pilot for Munz Airways, an airline that services the bush out of its headquarters at Nome.

In 1960, he established his store at the village but he stayed on that year at Nome and worked. He hired John Olson to run the store the first year. He also bought vacant buildings owned by the Lomen Brothers of Nome.

He is now converting one of those buildings, a warehouse, into a store building. His enterprise is known as Olson and Sons, General Merchandise.

CONFERENCE DELEGATE

Two weeks ago, Martin Olson served as a delegate from his village at the Nome Employment Development Conference. He served well. His forceful testimony on his village's employment pro-

blems, along with that of Thomas Johnson of Nome, was responsible for the unanimous passage of a recommendation at the conference.

In a private interview, Olson was just as forceful.

The village of Golovin has an airstrip 2,700 feet in length which cannot be lengthened because it is built on a spit.

"We definitely need a larger airport. For one thing, it can be used for supplying fresh fish market. Competition promotes higher prices for resources.

"And reindeer—the product is there and all we need is a way to move it. Tommy Johnson predicts there will be 18,000 reindeer in the herd at Golovin soon—biggest and oldest herd on Seward Peninsula.

"The airstrip would have to be moved because the existing strip is on a spit and it can't be lengthened. It could probably be located on a hill behind the village.

"I believe it should be at the minimum of 4,000 feet—5,000 feet would be preferable. If we get that, four-engined aircraft can come in and out of there."

GLIMMER OF HOPE

A glimmer of hope for such an eventuality was realized when the Employment Development Conference members passed the following recommendations:

"That immediate action be taken by the State of Alaska in cooperation with the Reindeer Herders Association and the Arctic Native Brotherhood to facilitate the implementation of the reindeer industry including:

A. Obtaining federal inspection for meat processing, development of appropriate and proper facilities for such processing and upgrading, and improvement of airports to permit adequate transportation arrangements for the industry."

VETERAN, FAMILY MAN

Olson served in the Navy during World War II. When he was mustered out in 1945 he came to Alaska. Sometime later, and through a generosity of a friend who helped him financially, he went to Tulsa,

financially, he went to Tulsa, Oklahoma and took a course at the Spartan School of Aeronautics.

Olson is married to former Maggie Curran who was adopted by the Currans from the John Fagerstrom family, Martin and Maggie have four children. The oldest girl is going to Unalakleet High School.

"There is nothing like raising a family out in the country," Olson said, happily.