

## Ice Road—

# The Road to Tuk

By LOIS KEATING  
The Road to Tuk

April 8, 1974—I've mentioned several times the winter ice road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, on the Arctic coast and I thought maybe you'd like to hear a little more about it.

The road is built on the east branch of the Mackenzie River, on ice that is perhaps three to four feet thick. Sometime in December, of each year, somebody with a four-wheel drive vehicle usually attempts the trip. Soon after that, the oil companies begin to plow out the road, which at first is quite narrow and bumpy + but by January, when it is officially open, it is plowed to a width of a three-lane highway in most places. It is fairly smooth, although there are occasional cracks caused by shallow water, shifting currents, and further on, by the changing tides.

Not far from the center of Inuvik, we drive over the bank and down onto the river. We go past the N.T.C.L. (Northern Transportation Co., Ltd.) docks and some of their huge barges, and then past KAPS Transport Co., where a huge Hovercraft is beached. Then we're off down the river, with Tuk at the other end, 118 miles away.

At this point, there are lots of trees along the banks, fairly close by. About five miles out of town, Bombadier Channel branches off to the left — and those wanting to go to Aklavik travel this road, which opens into other channels, crosses the main branch of the Mackenzie, into smaller channels again, and eventually you get to Aklavik, about 70 miles away (although the actual direct mileage is about 35 miles).

About 20 miles past Bombadier Channel, the hills begin to get higher on the right, with deep gullies, and several points of land jutting out. A few miles further, around one of these points, is the deserted settlement of Reindeer Station, which in the 40's and 50's was a busy place, with about 15 reindeer herders and their families living there. Whenever anyone is with us who was around in those days, there are always nostalgic stories conjured up by old memories.

Past Reindeer Station, the trees get sparser and sparser, and eventually we come to one point of land where you can see only a small cluster of trees — and on the next, none — and we have passed the treeline and are now truly in the Arctic.

About 10 miles further on, some buildings can be seen in the distance on a high point of land straight ahead. This is Tununuk, high on the southern end of Richards Island. Located here is also what is known as Bar C, Imperial Oil's staging base for their work in the Mackenzie Delta. There are huge trucks going in and out of here frequently, bringing supplies and transporting equipment. Here a side road branches off to the west, where it joins with roads leading to the oil camps at Ya-Ya Lakes, and to the new man-made islands presently being constructed in the Beaufort Sea. At the right, just past Tununuk, is Lucas Point, now also a staging camp, but formerly a local fishing spot.

Ten miles further are huge tanks and buildings on an even higher plateau, and this is Swimming Point, Gulf Oil's main base of operations. Swimming Point is so named, not for the hardy souls who venture on icy dip in the Mackenzie, but it marks the spot where, in days gone by, thousands of caribou crossed

over to the mainland beyond. Prior to the present day crews stationed here, it was a favorite fishing spot and a good picnic and camping site for the Native families on their way up and down the river.

In this area, we also get our first glimpses of pingos, the giant frost boils that appear in large numbers here near the Arctic Coast. These rounded hill-like mounds rise out of the flat tundra and dot the landscape for miles around.

Past Swimming Point, the road branches to the left and follows a small creek for 10 miles or so — there are no trees this far north, but high grasses and low bush still can be seen in the winter on the low banks.

After the road returns to the rougher ice of the big channel, we go past a number of islands until we finally come out at the mouth of the Mackenzie River. This is always an awesome place for me, as we can then gaze out on frozen miles of nothing but frozen ocean. This is Kugmallit Bay, which is a branch of the Beaufort Sea (in the Arctic Ocean system).

The road, now on thicker ice, roughly follows the coast, although at quite a distance, possibly because of tides, which cause large cracks. On the right, almost immediately, is Kittiga-zuit, a time honored, and now deserted, Eskimo camp — and right near here during the war was located a large Army camp, now dismantled, appropriately designated by the locals, as Kitty Camp.

A little farther on, we can see the spot called Whitefish Station, which is the main base for the beluga whaling camps in the summer.

Not far after this, we watch our first glimpse of Tuk, about 25 miles away. As we draw closer, we can see the huge oil tanks and the Dewline site and, for all the world, at such a distance, they look like high-rise buildings in the downtown section of a large city!

The road gets worse and worse as you get closer to Tuk, as there are now tidal currents underneath and lots of cracks — plus the fact that the road here is used repeatedly by heavy gravel trucks, hauling their loads from Tuk up to Swimming Point, and from there on out to the man-made island.

Tuktoyaktuk itself is an Eskimo village — now officially designated as a Hamlet, of about 600 people. It is spread out in a large, fairly narrow half circle, with the Dewline site on a point at the extreme northeast edge of town. It's a long walk from one end of town to the other.

Much has been written about Tuk, so I won't go into that here, but I'll finish up with a few little items about the trip back to Inuvik. One time we went just at sunset, and we could literally watch the sun go down — every second it got visibly lower on the horizon. I don't ever remember seeing the sun set with such rapidity before. Of course this far north, it stays light for a long period of time after the actual sunset.

On other nights, when the moon has been full, or nearly so, and the air crisp and cold, the northern lights produced such a glorious display that they entertained us all the way home.

On one occasion, with the moon full and bright, we turned off the lights and drove for a while with just the moonlight and the stars and the Aurora to guide us.

It won't be much longer before water starts appearing on

## Marquiss President of Weaver Bros.

ANCHORAGE — Robert C. "Bud" Marquiss has been named, president of Weaver Brothers, one of Alaska's foremost trucking firms. Marquiss, 55, was named vice president and general manager in 1973.

Born in Portland, Ore., he joined Weaver Brothers in 1952 at Valdez. Five years later Marquiss was transferred to Fairbanks as terminal manager where he remained until Weaver Brothers was acquired by Alaska International Air in 1973.

Now headquartered in Anchorage, Marquiss heads up the company that has taken the industry lead in Alaska pipeline construction support.

Eight hundred forty two truck loads were successfully transported over last winter's ice road from Fairbanks to project points north of the Yukon, and as far north as Chandalar under the direction of his Fairbanks staff.

According to Neil Bergt, president of AIA, Marquiss brings to Weaver Brothers, Inc. top management an exceptional background in Alaskan trucking and is one of the most capable trucking executives in the industry.

Weaver Brothers, Inc. 1974 first quarter earnings are the largest of the 27-year history of the company. Much of this is attributable to Marquiss' leadership said Bergt.

top of the road — and the cracks will become more prominent — and sometime around the end of April, the road will be closed to all traffic. And soon after that, the road, like Cinderella's coach, will turn back, not into a pumpkin, but into liquid and it will become a river again. And then for the next eight months, the only way to get to Tuk, will be by air, or by boat during the summer.

## CITY DOCK

Approval of a \$241,000 grant to help stimulate long-range economic growth and create new jobs of Haida Indians at Hydraburg, Alaska, was announced today by William W. Blunt, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

The City of Hydraburg applied for the grant from the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

The funds will be used to help develop the city dock.

Hydraburg officials say the project will enable a cold-storage fish facility to expand operations and add 29 employees to a present work force of 18. In addition, they add, the expanded facility will help strengthen the market for local and nearby fishing fleets.

## Native Olympics . . .

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is a possibility of turning it into a potlatch rather than a picnic, but there will of course be some of the traditional Fourth of July games," Anderson said.

In addition, the committee is soliciting applications for booths for Native arts and crafts at the University's Patty Gymnasium during the games.

Persons interested in setting up booths should contact Olympics Committee member Jim Savok at 452-1951, extension 127, or evenings at 452-1068.

The next meeting of the Olympics Committee is set for

## Vogler: Small High Schools— New Party Candidate

Small high schools in Native villages would be a priority item if he were to be elected governor of Alaska, Joe Vogler, 61, said Monday night in Fairbanks.

Vogler is running on a platform dedicated to ultimate independence for Alaska and has spearheaded an independence drive over the past year.

Running for Lt. Governor with Vogler is Wayne M. Peppler, also of Fairbanks.

Vogler said at a meeting in the basement of the Chamber of Commerce building that a poor educational system in America today is at the core of the country's troubles.

"If something is not done, this country is in serious danger," said the candidate who still needs 1,000 signatures of qualified voters to get on the November ballot as the candidate of a new Alaska Independence Party.

Vogler deplored his "glass-covered" central school buildings in use today and called for a return of the "little red school house." He said the state has failed to meet its constitutional obligation to provide high schools for the villages.

If elected, Vogler said, "I think we can do a better job than the Bureau of Indian Affairs has ever done (in education.) I don't like the idea of children shipped off to some distant school."

The candidate, a lawyer who never practiced, said that if

Alaska achieves independence, he sees no reason why all the provisions of the Native Land Claims Settlement Act could not be granted outright to the Natives "instead of waiting 17 years."

He also said that Natives, nor anyone else in the state, should have to pay taxes on their property. "I don't believe a man should be taxed on land he has accumulated," he said.

Vogler would reduce the tax burden of the people of Alaska by the use of a severance tax upon all natural resources.

Concerning his campaign, Vogler said it won't be a big and expensive one, but it will be "noisy." Several people made cash and check contributions at Mondays meeting.

The candidate said he will look into the possibility of speaking at a meeting to be held in Eskimo Village in Fairbanks, said to be the fourth largest Eskimo settlement in the state, and will also try to get to other Native villages if expenses permit.

## Virginia Dows . . .

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ordinator, students and boarding home parents too found in Dows a sympathetic ear, a person always willing to listen to their problems and then try to come up with an appropriate solution.

At the core of the plans for the potlatch are about 20 boarding home students at Lathrop High School. "They are very involved in this," Drake said.

"They are planning a clothe dance — traditional at potlatches in the Nenana area . . . and they will also pass out small gifts," she said.

In addition, the students have written home to their parents for help and have promises of muktuk from Wainwright, reindeer meat from Nome, fish from Shaktuluk and ptarmigan and caribou meat from Anak-tuvuk Pass.

Those planning to attend are also being asked to bring along a salad or a dessert. The rest of the meal will be provided.

## Demonstration . . .

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be rejected 5) BLM be requested to hire Native guards and 6) have the BLM notify the Native applicant when his application is processed.

Julie Gibbons, head of the adjudication of lands department in Anchorage BLM office which handles the Glennallen area, said she was not aware of the protest. John Shively, AFN executive vice president of lands, attended the protest.

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