

Trip to Halifax— Changes Into Towering Things

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GAMBELL — It was June 27, 1974 I went to the airport in Nome, Alaska to take a trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia! At the airport there as I hurried in, to the gate with my Eskimo drum and my suit case, I looked up at the lady on the line ahead of me. Oh, who could she be, but Lela Oman Gray!

And she was going, too. Oh, how happy I was to see her there as I was a little worried although I was very interested in the trip four of us Eskimo writers were going to take because I was always confused about telephones and big places.

But this trip we were taking was what Dr. Priscilla Tyler was getting us to be at the meeting at Halifax, Nova Scotia for Non-Western Humanities in the Americas.

From there, Lela Oman Gray and I travelled on to Kotzebue, Alaska, where Wien Airlines have a stop. We met a lot of people in the plane that were tourists.

At Kotzebue, Paul Greene joined us, he also have a travel paper to New York and on to Halifax. So from there we travelled on to Fairbanks. We stayed in Chena View Hotel until 4 p.m. This time we went on to the airport where we boarded Pan Am.

Oh, how everything began to change to enormous towering things. From Fairbanks, Alaska to New York, it took us 6 hours without stopping. Then at JFK airport hotel, we stayed overnight. In the morning we took American Airlines to Boston.

At Boston, Lela Oman Gray has a daughter who was spending summer with her family at her in-laws. It is very interesting historical place. I kept thinking I might be in a dream.

The family took us around little bit to show us some of the things of interest. I even put my hand in the water along the seashore at one of the places we stopped. The sea was not cold at all. Right away I felt like looking at the pages of history books once more, this time with meaning.

Then we finally got to Halifax where we were going to spend two weeks. We boarded Air Canada. It was June 30.

Arctic Survival . .

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Nikka had dragged himself away during the night and made his painful journey quarter of a mile away. He had crawled into a rather deep hole and died there. My great friend, playmate, and companion was gone forever.

The Burial

My father had us children get a small sled and we dragged it to the hollow where Nikka had died. Father lifted the dead leader into it and we took him back to the house.

Father conferred with mother and they told my sister, myself and my younger brother, Kairnok, to take our dog to a spot north of the house half way up the north beach. The distance was about 150 yards. Father took a shovel and walked ahead of us. He stopped and dug a hole four feet deep. He then lowered Nikka carefully into it.

We stood around, the whole family, and father gave a prayer. He then filled the grave.

Thus we buried our beloved Nikka — a great dog. He had given us his most faithful service through the years of his life. He had won the hearts of everyone of us in the family.

A dog? Yes — but we felt he was truly one of us.

1974. At the Airport there, it was good to see someone there to meet us. A couple of young people came to meet us. So we made our way to the university there in Halifax. It is St. Mary's University at the International Center. Our room was in the 16th floor. Boy, from there we could see far out.

There we met Priscilla Tyler. It was good, so good to see her as she is interested in our writing, and that's what is like treasure for us as Eskimo was never a written language.

I just grabbed her there and tried to realize that it was true. The trip was just too great to be true for me, but we were there starting on our two weeks with other nations.

POEM

The trip I took was something new

For an Eskimo of the land of ice and snow.

— G. S.

The first week was an Indian week. Dr. Will Antell leading, an educated Indian, who had his talks on culture heritage very strongly. If I can be of some help, I am ready to support him in his talks on heritage by the way of good writing and reading knowledge we have now.

Great, meeting have something for us who are Eskimos, Indians and other nations. I admire the thinking young man who got his education so well from the schools and got out to support his cultural heritage, he is so good. He doesn't dance in auditoriums but dances out in the open, by the lakes, or where the trees are, as his way.

But bless the big fellow. He has something good, an education.

So that week, we heard Dr. Antell, Peter Paul and Larry Martin. Dr. Peter Paul had his

baskets and all kinds of hand-made things out of wood to show.

He is interested in education although he didn't go to school too much, as he was spending much of his time out where the trees are and by the mountains and lakes, he might as well, too, as I saw it, it is just nice over there at the Lower 48 now. It is just comfortable outdoors many times.

And Larry Martin is another big man. He is educated, too, but he did a lot of dances and beating on his drum so inspiringly. I danced my Eskimo way on some of his beats, I couldn't help it, they are so inspiring.

The some evenings Dr. Priscilla Tyler would take us out places in Halifax. One place was at the cottage by the sea, Atlantic, too. Boy, I couldn't get over my surprise about getting my hand in the Atlantic!

We soon got to know each other in that university so well that we enjoyed every bit of it. One evening, we were taken to other university nearby, Dalhousie, there we met more and more people.

We heard male group singing. Boy, it was very good and inspiring singing. They say what money they get for this goes to hospital for hard hearing and blind.

This week went on and on like this. But towering buildings remind of cliffs back home, some even are way higher than our cliffs and they are very clean, not slippery like ours. And they are man-made!

Our week on Eskimo and our trip home will be on next week's paper.

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