

Toovak missing in whaling accident

BARROW—Hunter Vernon John Toovak, 18, missing and presumed dead as the result of a whaling accident on May 7. Toovak was a member of Captain John Leavitt's seven man crew which at 3 a.m. gave chase to and struck a giant bowhead whale. The animal apparently broached when the hunter's bomb exploded, capsizing their skin boat and turning the men into the ice bordered lead.

A 15 mph wind was reported at the time, along with a -18 degree chill factor, but quick rescue efforts by other nearby crews account for survivors.

The Barrow Rescue Department mobilized with the Navy Arctic Research Lab Fire Department, the Barrow Police and Alaska State Troopers, setting up contact with the accident scene through the Coast Guard Radio station.

Barrow citizens volunteered dry, warm clothing which was rushed to the ice by snow machine and—since no helicopter was available—evacuation of survivors was also made by snow machine.

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Missing . . .

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The men—Perry Elavgak, Ronald Numnik, Arthur Okteaka, Kenneth Toovik, Foster Simmonds, Olaf Okteaka and Captain Leavitt—were treated for exposure at the Public Health Service Hospital.