

Making moose stew

(C) 1976 Agnes Griffith

"You must be making stew for a moose," my grandfather said to me.

I was about 12 years old at the time. I usually visited my grandparents every fall to pick berries and visit.

My grandmother was out picking berries, so I had to do the cooking.

I had a lot of practice cooking for my four younger brothers and sisters, but my grandfather was used to Grandmother's cooking and not mine.

I was using freshly caught moose to make moose stew. In the stew I first put cut up pieces of moose and enough water to cover it in the cooking pot. Later when the moose was half way cooked, I added macaroni, potatoes, rice, salt, pepper, and usually canned mixed vegetables.

Through the years, I wondered what Grandfather meant when he asked if I was cooking for a moose. It may have been that the stew was too thick, or I was cooking too much, for six instead of three. To this day, I'll never know.

All I know is that I had fun cooking it. To make the stew more tasty, one could add some of the blood from the moose. The same goes for any kind of stew from birds or meat.

To go along with the stew, usually would be fried bread made from regular bread dough and then fried. This would go very good with the stew, which would be followed by brimming cups of hot tea and cookies.

I enjoyed going to my grandparents home in Eek, Alaska when I was young, for they fed me well. They still have a small trading store there.

During the summer, their goods come in on the ship to Bethel to Eek by barge since the river's channels are to shallow.

Once the shipments arrive in Eek, goods are carried up to the warehouse by local people and stored for the winter. Only things which store well are ordered this way.

Other perishable items are usually purchased in Bethel or brought in by air, but these are few.

One thing that children like is candy. Seeing other children come in and buy candy reminded me of the times when I was three or four years old in Bethel.

The grandparents had a store there then, and I used to come in and tell my grandfather that "my mom said I could charge \$1 of candy."

I don't know or remember if I got away with it, but I imagine I did with my grandfather's generosity.

At the age of 12 I was still able to have a candy bar, a package of gum or a can of pop if I so desired without paying for it.

In return for all the goodies, I would try to be as helpful as possible by doing dishes, cleaning house or doing laundry in the gas-run washing machine. We would do laundry outside on nice days and one could hear "whirrrs" all over the village on sunny days.

Eek is located about 60 miles from Bethel on the coast. Airplanes and boats come in and

land on Eek River on which the village of Eek is located.

"Iik" in Yupik Eskimo means "eyes", so I don't know if that is what the village was named after. Many villages were spelled the way the missionaries or white men thought they sounded like. Later, when the Yupik language was written and organized with letters representing certain sounds, spellings were different, but the way the village was originally spelled remained the same.

Eek has about 200 people living there. It has a village council, a Moravian church, two or three small stores, a National Guard armory, and a BIA school from grades 1 - 8 and Headstart. Students in high school must go either to Bethel, Anchorage or elsewhere. Otherwise, they do not continue.

During the winter, many students are gone and the village is smaller. But during the summer, students come back bringing their new ways and have fun mixing the two.

Some students meet and marry people from wherever they have gone to school. Others bring back someone they have met and settle down in Eek.

Summertime in Eek used to be fun for me, because my aunt was, then a teenager and we'd have fun going boating and camping.

One night we went down the river with a five-horse engine and camped—my aunt, my sister, another girl and myself. We sure had fun telling spooky stories and drinking tea. Then we'd run around or try to swim in the slough, but usually it was too muddy on the shores to do anything.

It would be spooky all alone at night, with the dogs howling, and the scary stories, but we would have a lot of fun.

To this day, we have fun reminiscing about the days of our youth.

My grandparents, now great-grandparents, William and Cecelia Pete, still live in Eek. William or "Willie" as everyone calls him, takes care of the store with the help of his son "Bill", who comes after my father, and occasionally fishes at Bristol Bay in his fishing boat.

They have nine children living, about 30 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, not counting numerous relatives up and down the Kuskikwim River.

I am the oldest of all the grandchildren, so I had a special place. My 16-month-old son is their first grandchild.

My grandmother had worked very hard to raise her children. Standing only 4'11", her sons of 5'10" or so towered over her. Yet, she was able to pay atten-



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JIMMY BEDFORD Photo



GREAT-GRANDPARENTS William and Cecelia Pete with author's son Robert, taken on October 13, 1975.

tion to every single one of them.

Today, their home is still a fun place for the children and grandchildren to visit. They are having a taste of good food and fun

times, just as I used to, over a decade ago.

Today, I am fortunate if I can make moose stew for three if not "for a moose."

Marston has timeless quality

(c) 1976 By P. M. Ivey

Have you ever been transported back through time to the past, through the present, and on to the future in a brief hour? Walk the pages of Alaskan history with M.R. "Muktuk" Marston. It's an experience you'll never forget.

At eighty plus, he may seem frail, but the man inside is still as strong as the day he set foot in Alaska and began to organize the Alaska Territorial Scouts, fighting the Army and the world for equal rights for the Natives of Alaska; a battle he has waged for nearly 36 years.

All immediate surroundings fade away when Muktuk's story pours forth, his deep set eyes flashing confirmation of the events that molded the man and helped shape the destiny of all those around him.

The listener becomes a traveler, musing supplies to the Scouts in weather no one else would venture, half frozen oneself. Other men of Alaska were his companions; they are the listeners companions for a brief time.

Muktuk wrote a book, "Men of the Tundra". Most of his story is in it, and a good book it is, too. But the story is better in the telling. It is the magic of the man that makes it so.

A delegate to the Alaska Constitutional Convention in 1955, Muktuk described himself, according to a fellow delegate, as "just an interested bystander who wanted to make sure they did it right."

At the Alaska Constitutional Review held recently, when asked about Alaska's progress over the last 20 years he said, "We've



—Photo By JIMMY BEDFORD

come a long way, baby, from the Scouts to the Land Claims (Settlement) Act. And a good thing it is, too. Best deal we ever made—40 million acres and a billion dollars. After all, it was theirs, anyhow.

"I came to the Constitutional Convention to save the Natives. When it looked like we were going to become a state, the Department of the Interior wanted to form reservations here, 100 of them. I stopped them, too."

"When we bought Alaska from Russia, they said, 'make settlement with the Natives'. We're 103 years doing it, but it is a good deal all around. There are Natives in the House and the Senate, and they're going to be all right."

When asked about the econom-

ic development in Alaska, he said "I'm for OMAR! (Organization for the Management of Alaska's Resources).

Muktuk stated that the gas line should be built in Alaska by Alaskans, and that the gas should flow under the American flag all the way to the market.

Parks are nice, according to Muktuk. But they are choking us and taking up thousands of acres of the most beautiful farm land in the world.

"There are thousands of acres on the Yukon, Kuskokwim and the North River; good fertile land being locked up forever. We have to go to the people of America and present our story. We did that in order to get statehood, and it worked. It's a very serious problem."

One of Muktuk's prime con-

cerns is the agricultural future of Alaska. He developed a model farm at Unalakleet that has produced tremendous amounts of root crops. This farm is run by Eskimos, with Muktuk providing seed and fertilizer. He says he recently made a provision in his will to provide funding for the continuation of his agricultural program "after I am gone. At my age, I may not be around much longer," says Muktuk.

That may be the biggest story Muktuk ever told. On October 24, he married the former Mrs. Elsie Howard of Anchorage in a private ceremony in Hawaii, according to the Anchorage Daily Times.

Any listener believes that 100 years from now, M.R. "Muktuk" Marston will be young. The man is timeless.