

# SEN. BUCKLEY GOES WHALING

## U.S. Senator Observes Subsistence Hunting

By MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN

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**POINT HOPE** — With warm affection, Sen. James L. Buckley bade farewell to the Eskimo whaling crew with whom he had spent a week living on the ice of the Chukchi Sea above the Arctic Circle.

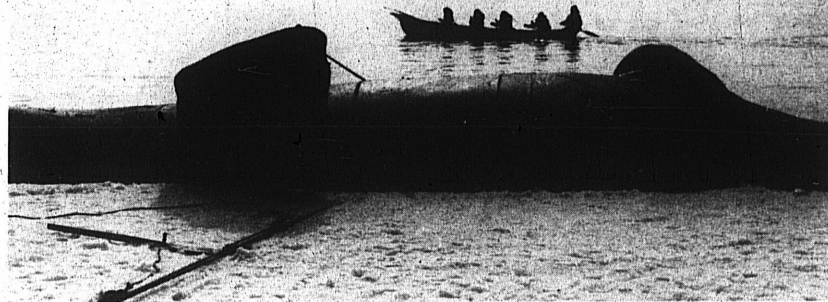
"You have all been wonderful," said the 51-year-old Senator, who had been invited to this village by an old Eskimo friend. Point Hope is an outpost

way as the survival of the Plains Indian was dependent on the bison.

"You folks bring us luck," beamed Claudia Tuzroyluka, the wife of the captain of the whaling crew. For more than a month the 15 men, women and children of the crew had camped out while hunting the bowhead. But they had not killed a whale until two days after Buckley arrived with Laura Bergt, Native leader from Fairbanks.

The campsite was seven miles from the remote village along a trail that wound through compacted ice formations, some standing 60 feet high. In some places there were seal holes and treacherous pools covered only by a tissue thin crust. The trip out on sleds pulled by snow machines was a roller-coaster ride

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**50-TON PT. HOPE WHALE** — Looking not unlike a submarine, the huge 50-foot whale lies in the Chukchi Sea moored to the main ice two weeks ago. The sea giant was struck and taken by whaling Captain Seymour Tuzroyluka and his young crew. The whaling maneuver was witnessed by Sen. James L. Buckley of New York, Laura Bergt of Fairbanks, and Michael Kaufman of The New York Times.

— Photo by LAURA BERGT



**SEN. JAS. L. BUCKLEY**

of 370 whose subsistence and culture are dependent upon the bowhead whale in much the same

# Senator Jas. L. Buckley Goes Whaling . . .

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in face-biting wind.

On May 23, after a long wait on an icy point a mile from the camp, the crew's captain, Seymour Tuzroyluke, spotted the arched hump of a bowhead whale surfacing 150 yards from shore. Swiftly his men sped their sealskin boat into the water and within two minutes Tuzroyluke had killed the whale by throwing two detonating harpoons into its back.

However, as the boatmen strained to drag their catch ashore, the harpoons worked themselves free and the bowhead fell to the bottom. All day the crew grappled for it in 25 fathoms of water. Finally they had to give up as the pack ice — a vast expanse of floating crags that stretched to the horizon — moved in to cover the open water and the whale.

It appeared that the animal, whose meat would have fed this entire village for a year was lost.

But then at 3 p.m. last Sunday morning Mrs. Tuzroyluke burst into the tent where the Senator was sleeping with four of the younger crew members.

"They got whale," she called, ringing a bell to alert the members of the crew camped out over 20 miles. Quickly the tent emptied and everyone trotted to the edge of the ice.

A shift of the wind had pushed the ice mass that had covered the whale to the west and even though the shoreline had been radically altered, the men knew where to look. Hooks that they had fashioned the day before from iron rods caught the flukes and the massive body of the whale, buoyed by gases formed by putrefaction, came easily to the surface, floating belly up.

The steaks would no longer be fit for human consumption: they would go to feed the dogs. But the muktuk — the skin and outer layer of blubber that is the staple of the Eskimo diet — was fine. There would be some 20 tons of it.

For the next 30 hours fatigued men from some eight whaling camps butchered the whale and placed 800-pound loads of meat on sleds drawn by ice machines. The meat was then stored in a natural underground freezer dug out of the permafrost.

Through much of this time Senator Buckley watched and marveled at the energy, ingenuity and cooperation of the men.

He observed that Friday he was to take part in a panel at his 30th Yale reunion, the subject of which was to be "The American Dream: Is More Still Better?"

"In Point Hope, it seems that which is best has very little to do with material possessions," the Senator said. "We are having the privilege of sitting in on people worked in harmony with their environment, working very hard, enjoying life, plus having children participate in family activities as part of an economic unit."

Buckley has long been interested in the Arctic and has made several expeditions to Northern Canada and to Greenland, although this trip marked the first

time he had lived with Eskimos. He made the trip because of this interest and because he had been invited to view the hunt by The Tundra Times, a weekly that circulates in Eskimo villages. It was not a publicity-seeking trip. The New York Times sought and obtained permission to accompany the Senator from Buckley's hosts.

"This has been an enormously rewarding experience for me and not merely because of the drama of the whaling operation," said Buckley while waiting for the plane to Kotzebue. "You could also see human relationships working closely. There is a sense of identity and place, which we have largely lost."

And indeed there was. In six days of tension, frustration and cold, no one had uttered an angry word, not even when the whale appeared lost.

"Down there on the ice, we can't afford to get angry," said Warren Nashookpuk, who had returned to join Tuzroyluke's crew after working for half a year with an oil exploration team on the North Slope.

Many of the men of Point Hope spend long periods away from the village working or going to schools run by the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs. Sylvester Keats, for example, was an airline mechanic for Pan American in Los Angeles for eight years before he was drawn back to this barren spit of tundra where hunting means survival.

In addition to hunting the whale last week, the men would from time to time shoot seals for the blubber used to feed the cooking and heating stove of the camp tent. Young boys would down eider ducks with slingshots, bolos or ice chunks. This was done not for sport, but for supper.

In the tent the girls helped Mrs. Tuzroyluke make hundreds of doughnuts fried in seal oil. They cooked duck stew, whale, reindeer and caribou and gallons of "coffee." People slept two or three hours at the most and they seemed to be eating small portions throughout the days and nights when temperatures ranged between 10 and 20 degrees.

But there was also time for

play. Lisa, the youngest of the six Tuzroyluke children spent hours by herself playing on a hopscotch pattern she had etched in the ice.

On Friday, when her father came in to the tent for dinner, she demanded, "Daddy make me a balloon." Despite his concern about the lost whale, he took the webbed foot that had been cut off an eider and painstakingly extracted the small bones with a quill. It took an hour. Then he blew up the skin and gave Lisa her balloon. In town, four-year-old children kissed the visitors unself-consciously when they met them.

Mr. Tuzroyluke is 49 years old. He has been hunting caribou, polar bear, fox, seal and wolf since his father fell ill when he was 14 and he had to support his family. But the bowhead remains most important to him.

Like the American Bison, the numbers of bowhead whale have been thinned, not by natives hunting for food, but by whites seeking commercial profit. In the case of the bowhead it was slaughtered in great numbers in the 19th century by whaling

crews from New Bedford and Nantucket.

Because of its high blubber content, the bowhead was particularly prized for its oil. In addition, its huge feeding apparatus, called baleen, was used for corsets. The baleen acts as a sieve in the animal's mouth, rejecting anything but plankton.

An international whaling agreement now prevents anyone but Eskimos from hunting for the bowhead, which can be as much as 65 feet in length and 65 tons in weight. But just how decimated the species is a matter of some controversy. The Rare Animal Relief Effort, which has been active in trying to save the world's declining whale population, maintains that the bowhead, the blue and the right, are gravely threatened. Other naturalists disagree.

Before accepting the invitation to visit here, Senator Buckley, a birdwatcher and conservationist, was assured by government biologists that subsistence whaling posed no threat to the bowheads. With a week to go in the season seven whales have been taken here.