

# Tom Richards, Jr.'s Column--

## *Muktuk in Travel Bag Permeates Laura's Wardrobe*

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THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.

OLONGAPO CITY — I imagine that my presence in Washington from 1970 through 1972 angered some people and was, to say the least, an inconvenience to others. I have never, for example, made any secret of my love for Eskimo food and how my absence from Alaska has increased my hunger for it.

With all the Alaskans visiting D.C. during that time, I thought that there might be some chance I could get a regular supply of such foods as dried fish and muktuk. I asked some of these travelers to bring to me some of these delicacies, and I was happy with the response.

Laura Bergt, our beautiful Eskimo ambassador who has

rubbed noses with the famous and powerful, never should have granted me the favor. She was to come to Washington from Fairbanks to attend a meeting of the National Council on Indian Opportunity, and consented to bring along a package of muktuk from my mother.

Laura, a seasoned traveler, has a reputation for her talent in being the last person to check in with the airline and board a flight. It was no different on this flight. With few precious moments remaining before the airplane's departure, she picked up the frozen muktuk, threw it in her luggage, and roared off to the airport.

After disembarking her aircraft at Dulles Airport near Washington, she was dismayed to learn that the airline had

misrouted her bag and was working to trace its whereabouts. She bemoaned the inconvenience of having "nothing to wear" except what she had on until the airline found her luggage.

Then the poor woman remembered the muktuk, and also recalled that she hadn't taken the precaution of wrapping the package securely. She endured a painful wait for the bag, all the time thinking about how the muktuk must be thawing, and the oil permeating her wardrobe.

Inevitably, the bag arrived after the muktuk had completely thawed, giving her outfits a distinctive aroma. Maybe, she shouldn't have taken the trouble of specifying those cleaning instructions to the hotel laundry. If she hadn't, Laura would truly have been able to show Mr. Agnew and the members of the President's cabinet a genuine air of Eskimo hospitality.