

Poem— Wildlife Experiment Station

(Pt. Barrow)

The stained-yellow bear
kneels in gray slush
and licks the shoe
of the photographer.
His nose is too wide
for the slot in the bars
but a wet paw
turns slyly sidewise.

In one swipe, the claws
come back with clothing.
The bear wheels quickly,
plunges into his tank,
munching the shreds.
He takes gurgling gulps
of brackish water.

Smelling of fish
and splattered with muck
the nearly nude tourist
is babbling:
"He could have killed me."

Outside a sign proclaims
"Studies in Arctic Wildlife
and Ecology."

—OLIVER EVERETTE
Fairbanks, Alaska