

Cst. P.G.Hunt,
R. C. M. P.,
" G " Division,
OTTAWA, Ont.

May 29th., 1942.

Dear Folks:

Believe it or not, your letter of September 5th., arrived today & again I cannot thank you enough for writing. We are really out of " circulation " --- being now at the North Magnetic Pole on Boothia Peninsula. There is no mail service here, but we just happened to get ours by the goodness of Dog teams coming in this direction from Coppermine, which is about a distance of 900 miles. Should you write me again in the not too distant future, use the above address & I will in due course receive your letters OK.

The snaps you sent me were lovely & it was great to see you all looking so well. I have taken a great many pictures since I have been in the arctic but have none developed yet. I did not bother to have them sent out, as the postage charges on parcels (even small ones) is all out of proportion to their value, so I will just wait until I get outside myself. If I get any good ones I shall send ~~them~~ ~~along~~ ~~to~~ ~~you~~ --- you may find them of interest. One of the other lads here sent out his film & he has given me one of the snaps, which I am sending to you. It is a snap of three Polar Bears that came up along side the ship one day when we were caught in the heavy ice. They are indeed cute little devils & very, very inquisitive. These were just " baby bears " & they were so comical in their antics. I guess this was the first time they had ever seen a ship, & they acted just like three very curious children. I wish you could have seen them.

Your letter was indeed full of news that I wanted to hear. Letters are few & far between in this country, so you can be sure they are literally eaten up when-ever they do manage to arrive. Bert, I am sorry to say hates nothing in this world worse than writing letters & I have only heard from him once since I came north. I had a letter from the Folks at Home & they tell me that his letters are few & far between too, so I guess we will all have to bear down on him & wake him up one of these days. Claude certainly has grown, & is a fine looking man in his uniform. You certainly have cause to be proud of him & I hope this War brings him no harm. Dennis has had over two years of it now in England & I keep praying that it will be over soon before his good luck runs out. ~~He~~ ~~always~~ ~~was~~ ~~a~~ ~~little~~ ~~devil~~ & if there is any trouble to get into, I guess he will be right in the middle of it. *delete*

(OVER)

I am afraid I can give you no news of anything except what is going on right hereand that means I shall have to talk about the Eskimos and Patrick George ! However, you can always stop when you get sick of it, eh ?

Well, to begin with, I am just fine. In the best of health & never felt better. Have been having a great time patrolling the country & am really becoming an Eskimo myself. Was away on one trip for over two months to take the Census of the natives on Boothia Peninsula. All in all travelled approx. 1200 miles with the dog team & had many interesting experiences. I have almost reached the stage where I prefer to sleep in a snow house than any other place (????!!!!) Can you imagine me sitting over a primus stove cooking my supper with all my fur clothes on. Great big fur mitts dropping deer hair into the tea pail & the frying pan ! Have you ever tried to use a knife & fork with boxing gloves on ---- well thats just about what it amounts to. These fur mitts are huge things & are continually shedding hair, ---- you can imagine what fun we have..... not to mention how the cold makes your nose run, which is very inconvenient when its 50 below & you are trying to mix up a stew or such like without freezing your fingers & still trying to keep as much unnecessary matter as possible from finding its way into the grub pot ! Then after about 4 weeks without a wash I just had to do something about it, so I very successfully managed to shave & wash out of a cup . You want to try it sometime Osborne ! The next time it is 45 below, just go out in the back yard & build a snow house . Go inside & try & keep warm. You must not heat it up too much with a primus stove or it will melt on you ! But it will protect you from the wind anyway . Now cut some nice big snow blocks for your bed & put a ground sheet on them . You can sit on this while the kettle boils, you must not let the kettle boil too much or it will steam up all your cloths & your bed & then you will just be one solid sheet of ice, so be careful , as your house must never get above freezing temperature inside or it will melt away on you . Now that the kettle is boiling see if you can dig up a can with a shiny bottom to use as a mirror while you shave---- you have one --- fine ? Now try & keep the steam from the kettle from clouding it or you will not see your beard ---- wipe it off every little while with a rag before it freezes & you'll find it works OK . Now don't lather all your face at once or it will freeze - just do a few inches at a time --- keep the kettle on the boil because a cup of hot water will soon freeze at 40 below & you must have hot water to take the ice off the razor which forms when you get too ambitious & try to shave off

too much at one time ! Well, you'll get the worst of the whiskers off, but having a good satisfying wash is what you want now ; so get a cup of boiling water (you cant carry extra weight like wash basins etc on the trail & they take up too much room --- however, a cup will do, as you just want to wash a few inches of skin at a time & dry it quickly or you will find yourself freezing up into an icicle ! But it can be done & perhaps we don't get many a good laugh too !

The Eskimo are a very smart people (in their own way) and I think I mentioned in my last letter that once I get talking about them, I am just as liable to ramble on, and on, and on and on ! However, as I have nothing else of interest to tell you I will relate a few stories of the natives & attempt not to draw them out too much.

When I was taking the Census I was asking one very old women how many children she had. Instead of saying 5 or 6 (as the case might be) she said " Keeack, ate by dogs; Kiallo, put out to freeze; Tingwa, ate by Eskimo; Kinkok born dead; Malow, up north; Torkta, down south. Of course she could not count, or speak in English & as my command of the Eskimo language is very limited, she was doing the best she could to tell me about each child she had. Of course the old practice of killing girl babies is now non-existent, but 20 or 25 years ago when there were already two or three girl babies in one family any new female arrivals were either fed to the dogs at birth or put out to freeze. It is the Baby Boy that is worshipped by the Eskimo family. He is THE boss of the entire family & never punished by whipping under any circumstances.

There was one Old Fellow on Banks Island who had been to Aklavik & had some false teeth made by a dentist there. But when he got home he decided that these false teeth where not strong enough for chewing bones & raw meat (which they live on almost entirely) so he got busy on a Musk-ox horn. (The Musk-ox is a wild animal in the far northern islands very much like the old buffalo of the prairies. Well he copied the dentists plate & made himself a set of false teeth out of this Ox-horn, just using a knife & file to work with. It is really wonderful to see some of the work they can do.

The young children are taught early that life is hard & to live they must kill. There was

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one man who had caught a duck with a broken wing. He took it home & put in on the floor, then he got two sticks which he gave to his little girl about 5 years old & his little boy about 8 and told them to go after the duck. Of course the poor duck was helpless & could just squack & jump around as the children clubbed it to death. When told that this was cruel he could not understand it at all, but replied that his children must be taught not to be afraid of anything that lives in the arctic. If they were afraid to hunt & kill, then they would starve.

Have you ever slept 10 in one bed? Well I was one of ten that spent a night on one Eskimo bed in a snow house & believe me I hope never to do it again. The Eskimo bed is made of snow covered with deer skins. We all carry our own eider-down sleeping bags. This night we got to one village and found Canon Turner, the Church of England Missionary there too, so we all got in one big snow house to have a real good evenings chat in English. When bed time arrived we stretched out as follows (side by side) The Eskimo who owned the house, his wife & little baby, then the Minister, the Sgt. & myself & beside me was another Eskimo, his wife & their little baby. Gee! did that place ever stink! And How! They had some rotten fish & seal meat in some pots & the smell that came from them was just about enough to take your head off. However we managed to live through the night Ok, but I shall remember it for a long time.

Guess I had better sign off again. This letter is starting to draw out into the usual " Hunt-Chatter ". Hope to hear from you again in the not too distant future. I may be outside for this coming winter, but most likely I will remain in the north until the spring of 1943. However if you send a letter to the address I wrote at the top of this letter it will be sure to reach me some time.

Best Regards to you all &

Only The Best of Good Wishes,

Pet.