

Five Days Without Nights

Erma Chinander and Muriel Rocene of the Covenant

THE ALARM rang at 5:15 a.m. on Tuesday, June 26. It wasn't hard to get up when we realized that this was the day we were to leave for Alaska on a 75th anniversary tour sponsored by the Covenant world missions department. These were to be days without nights—both because of the fact that it was the time of the midnight sun in Alaska and because of our full travel schedule.

The evening before, at a briefing session at Seattle Pacific College under the leadership of our tour director, Ralph P. Hanson, executive secretary of world missions, we had become acquainted with our fellow travelers. There were Covenant executives, ministers, doctors, nurses, teachers, housewives, engineers, secretaries, office personnel, contractors, accountants, a stock broker, lawyer, farmer, some retired as well as some "tired" members. The group was very congenial (all 45 of them), and the humor displayed portended good times ahead. Lloyd Sundstrom, manager of KICY, became the 46th member of our group from Seattle to Anchorage, enroute to his home in Nome.

Flight No. 2881 was called at the Sea-Tac airport, and we said farewell to friends who had come to bid us journey mercies. As we flew over the mountains and glaciers, people moved from side to side of the plane to view the sites and take pictures. Our pilot told us that Alaska is more than twice the size of Texas and has one-third Seattle's population. It has more coastline than the entire "lower 48" and the average temperatures range from 45 to 85 during the summer. The city of Nome is farther west than Hawaii. It is the only state with four time zones, and we had firsthand experience with all four in our travels.

FAIRBANKS. Our introduction to Alaska was via a visit to the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, where Missionary Maynard Lomborg who is studying there for the

summer, welcomed us. Our bus tour also included a visit to one of three gold dredges still in operation. Fairbanks is the northern terminus of the Alaska Highway and has a population of 15,000.

ANCHORAGE. From Fairbanks we flew on a DC4, which is the customary type plane for interior Alaska transportation, to Anchorage, a city of 45,000 (75,000 including military) which would compare favorably with any of our fast-growing cities in the "lower 48." We were met by a caravan of cars driven by missionaries and members of the local Covenant church and shown the city, with stops at the new and lovely parsonage of Paul and Nelle Carlson; the studio of native painter George Ahgupuk; the "Gilded Cage" for shopping; and then to our hotel rooms.

We eagerly anticipated the dinner prepared for us at the Salvation Army hall, and our hosts and hostesses for the evening included some native Alaskans as well as some native 48ers. A highlight of the evening was the dedication of the site of First Covenant church of Anchorage. A Frontier Friends check of \$10,019 was presented by Joseph C. Danielson, executive secretary of home missions. President Clarence A. Nelson led in the dedicatory prayer, and the audience sang "In the Sweet By and By"—first in English, then Eskimo, and then Swedish.

It was still Tuesday, and what's more, still daylight, when we returned to our hotels at 9 p.m.—about 20 hours after our alarm had rung in Seattle. Though twilight persisted, we were ready for bed.

UNALAKLEET. If we thought a 6:30 departure from Seattle Pacific College was bad, it was only an introduction to leaving our hotels at 5:45 a.m. on Wednesday. Departure from the airport was on time and the flight uneventful, except for the bit of anxiety about landing at Unalakleet due to heavy fog. We were greeted by Norman Barram,

Alfred White, Paul Lindholm, Wilmer Oudal, and some of the Eskimo friends.

After a delicious lunch, we made a tour of Covenant high school and watched natives cutting king salmon for commercial marketing. Next we were transported army fashion—which was the occasion for many a hearty laugh—to the radar installation site in the area. This site is part of the NORAD system, and it was exceedingly interesting to see firsthand the precautions used to assure America's defense against the enemy.

A unique experience in Unalakleet was the visit by invitation to the homes of native people for afternoon coffee. Some of the ladies had made coffee bread, cake, and pies that would rival our Swedish cooking. Dinner at night was in the basement of the Covenant church. We enjoyed king salmon steaks prepared by native ladies, together with all the other foods prepared by our missionaries, for a lovely meal.

An anniversary service in the pine-paneled church sanctuary followed. The program included a welcome by the church chairman, John Auliye, and a greeting from the Rev. Arvid Stenstrom of Sweden, who together with his wife was an appreciated guest on the entire trip. A representative of the Swedish Covenant Church actually began the work in Unalakleet 75 years ago and then turned it over to the American Covenant two years later. President Nelson gave a greeting and presented the beautiful illuminated manuscript prepared for the 75th anniversary of Alaska missions. This manuscript was first presented at the annual meeting in Seattle to the representative of Alaska and was in turn presented to each of the churches we visited. It will be finally placed in the Unalakleet church. The assistant pastor, young Dana Kopanuk, and his wife, told of their work in vacation Bible school this summer. Both are recent graduates of our Unalakleet

Headquarters Staff, Chicago, Describe the Missions Tour to Alaska.



Members of the 75th anniversary tour party bound for Alaska pose for picture prior to their departure from Sea-Tac airport near Seattle, Wash-ton. They spent five days in the 49th state.

leethigh school and Dana is now
rolled in the seminary there.
We were housed largely in the
high school dormitory and in mis-
sionary homes. Some of the men
brought sleeping bags and an all-night
flying trip. It was a wonderful
experience, they reported—but no
Thursday morning, as guests in
the homes of our hosts and host-
esses, we enjoyed a sourdough pan-
cake breakfast. Our plane was de-
layed in taking us to Nome, but this
gave us opportunity to view the
village at closer range. We walked
the dirt roads of unpainted houses,
lines of fish hung for drying,
caches, and tied-up huskies,
& felt we knew and enjoyed in a
new way a friendly village.
But before we leave Unalakleet,
we must share the experience of
visiting at the gravesite of pioneer
missionary A. E. Karlson. We recog-
nized from pictures the tombstone
and its inscription, "When he came,
there were no Christians; when he
left there were no pagans." Stand-
ing with us were living evidences

of the truth of the inscription—
Eskimo friends whose lives had
been redeemed and reflected the love
of Jesus Christ.
NOME. Our pilot had to make an
instrument landing in Nome (popu-
lation 2,300) due to heavy fog. There
we were met by the Roald Amund-
sons; Ralph Fondell, whose uncle,
Elmer Fondell, was in our party;
Ernie Hansons; Howard Nelsons,
whose parents, the Raymond Nel-
sons, were also in the party; Lloyd
Sundstroms; Ruth Ost Towner and
family; Erma Johnson; and several
natives.
A bus transported us to the Luth-
eran church where a tasty *smörgåsbord*
was served by the missionary
staff. The afternoon tour, with
Ruth Ost Towner as guide, took us
to the transmitter of KICY and a
stop at King Island to watch native
ivory carvers at work. Then our
bus continued out of Nome, where
we walked one mile to Claim No. 9,
the famous gold-mining site in
Covenant history.
Following a reindeer barbecue in
the evening, we visited the KICY

studio and made a tape for broad-
cast the following day. We were
impressed with KICY's facilities and
felt this was a shining example of
the Covenant's participation in a
new Alaska—an equivalent to the
pace set by our government hospi-
tals and institutions erected in the
last few years.
Friday morning was ideal for fly-
ing so our charter flight to Cape
Prince of Wales was on! Our pilot
circled over the hillsides to show
us a herd of grazing caribou. We
glimpsed the village of Wales far
below us, and then flew out to Little
Diomed Island. The pilot com-
mented that in all his flying in this
area, he had seen clear weather like
we had only two or three times be-
fore. We flew between little Dio-
mede (U. S.) and Big Diomed
(Russia) islands and viewed the
coast of Siberia. One wing of our
plane was in "today" and one in
"tomorrow" as we touched the inter-
national date line.
Back in Nome in the afternoon
some of the men visited a gold
dredge and the rest of us went shop-
ping, with Nome's "board-walk" dis-
playing articles of ivory, jade, gold,
hematite, and fur. Eskimo Cove-
nanters came in from their fish
camps to join us for the anniversary
service Friday evening. Eskimo men
gave witness to their faith in Christ
and graciously helped us to realize
the happiness they experience in
their Christian lives. At the close
of the service we were invited to
"open house" at the missionary
homes. This afforded another op-
portunity to visit with the mission-
aries, sense their concern for the
work, and appreciate some of the
problems of living in this northern-
most part of our land. These mis-
sionary homes and the three hotels
furnished us lodging in Nome.
KOTZEBUE. Saturday morning we
began our trek home via Kotzebue,
a village 30 miles north of the
Arctic Circle. Here we were in the
realm of the midnight sun and in
(See BUSY DAYS, page 13)