

Alaska the Beautiful

by ELEANOR STOY REED

ALASKA is an artist's dream of beauty. About 57 years ago my father and mother took me along as a tourist to Alaska. We went on a Canadian ship and wound through the awesome fjords of Alaska, to see endless glaciers and waterfalls, forested shores and snowcovered mountains ever opening up to new vistas ahead. From Skagway, the end of the water trip, we went over the White Pass Railway to Lake Bennett, over a high plateau, following long narrow bluegreen lakes. On all sides snowcovered mountains brooded with snowstorms veiling many of their summits. I made up my mind to live in this wonderful country and here I am, after 45 years of residence, married to a sourdough who was brought to Nome in 1900 at the age of 10.

There have been many great changes, some for the better, others for the worse. A great increase in population has brought the size of Fairbanks from a small town of 2,500 to about 40,000 including the surrounding area and the military. We have mostly paved roads now but much of the game we used to see, such as caribou by the thousands and millions on the Circle Trail are there no more. The tame moose cows we used to stop and admire along our roads are no longer seen, even though they existed up to three summers ago. Moose lived in our woods also. We used to look out on our field and watch them get down on their knees to dig broccoli out from under the snow and in summer they came into our field to eat my peas and cabbages. McKinley Park is the refuge of these hunted creatures. There with no danger from man, are seen white mountain sheep, bears, foxes, beaver, moose and in summer, caribou. But these gentle animals cannot winter in the park and have trails

leading away into country where there are hunting camps. It is our hope that the park will be enlarged to include the winter ground of the caribou.

We in Fairbanks, which is situated in the interior of Alaska, believe we have about the best climate in Alaska. The summers are generally sunny, hot and dry. This summer it was 91 degrees with a following week or two of 85 to 89 degrees. The dryness leads to terrible forest fires which are burning much of our forestland. But the country is very green despite the dryness. In Interior Alaska we have many wildflowers such as bluebells, wild roses and purple iris and fields of wild cotton and the pink and lavender fireweed which sometimes fills vacant fields and grows along roads and around old cabins. And there are edible wild blueberries to pick, as well as wild raspberries, cranberries, strawberries and sometimes currants. The forest is spruce and when burned, changes to aspen, birch, cottonwood and willow. The winters are long. Snow generally goes by the middle of May and comes in the latter part of October or early November. When I hear chickadees calling I know winter is near. We feed these brave cheery little birds even in the coldest weather. I have seen them feeding at -45 degrees. In summer we have all the traditional birds of the States, including robins, whitecrows and junkos. Over all this lush loveliness soars the snowy Alaska Range. From our university, we can see Mt. McKinley, though often clouded. Across the valley 50 miles away is Mt. Hayes, 14,000 feet high, Mt. Hess and Deborra and others.

Because we pioneers had 40 acres of vacant government land along the river, Fairbanks was chosen the center of the Centennial exhibit—Alaska '67.

We are very proud of what they have built. The exposition buildings include Pioneer Hall, an art gallery where the works of the Alaskan artist, C. "Rusty" Heurlin, are displayed. He has painted authentic Alaskan scenes in the Chilcoot Pass, early Dawson, and Fairbanks itself from the earliest days.

A native village on view at the exposition is composed of Indians and Eskimos who engage in traditional dances and "blanket tosses." Nearby are the reindeer which the villagers drive through the woods behind wheels in summer, and a dogteam of striking Alaskan malamutes on which the tourists and others are whizzed through the woods on wheels.

The river steamer Nenana, moored in a shallow water pond, is a favorite meeting place for reasonable meals. One village has reproduced a church and the old sourdough log cabins, furnished as they were long ago when they stood in Fairbanks. There is something to please everyone—children and old people, local Alaskans and tourists. A hot air balloon for rides and concessions, a theater, and old fashioned train

which goes around the grounds, have special appeal for visitors.

When winter shuts down all our activities and the golden leaves fall from the trees and all is white with snow, Alaska is still beautiful. At times when frost builds up on the limbs of trees it seems like fairyland—at intervals silent dogteams streak across the snow or one hears the swish of skis. Then it is truly a land for young people to enjoy. But old folks too can dress warmly in fur parka and boots and walk, since in interior Alaska the snow in the country is not slippery. The winter days are rarely colder than 30 degrees, more often from 10 to 20 degrees. Nights are colder but you are snug inside with TV or your hobby.

Our new governor is concerned about the slaughter of our game and burning forestlands and the hundred million acres claimed by about 4500 natives. And of course there is the ever present problem of taxes. But we have wandered back and forth across the United States and have found no place that pleased us as much as Alaska. To me it is a land of rare beauty.

Theodore Buehler of Alma, Wisconsin, sent a question asking "do the authors of the Great Books have anything to say about taxation," and he was rewarded with a 54-volume set. Dr. Mortimer J. Adler, associate editor of "The Great Books of the Western World," replied at considerable length to the question, with references to Mill, Ricardo, Erasmus, Hamilton and Burke. Mr. Buehler, a well known Georgist and former publisher of the Buffalo County Journal, thinks any statement on taxation is incomplete which does not include the ideas of Henry George.

The People's Column in The Birmingham Eccentric (Michigan newspaper) introduced the single tax by the back door. Harold G. Diedrick, complaining that "it costs billions to make out tax forms and collect taxes" on all levels, whereas the single type would replace all this work and expense. "It is a lot easier to collect from one source than a hundred."

One easy tax could be a percentage of sales, another could be the payroll tax, payable at the source. But he added, "this single tax would especially apply to property owners — a tax on the value of the land he has title to. Never mind having him give an account of the cost of the buildings and personal possessions.

"If a business man had to go into detail about each customer's personal life before quoting a price, how much would it cost to operate a business?" he asks. "So why not give the single tax system a thought and trial?"