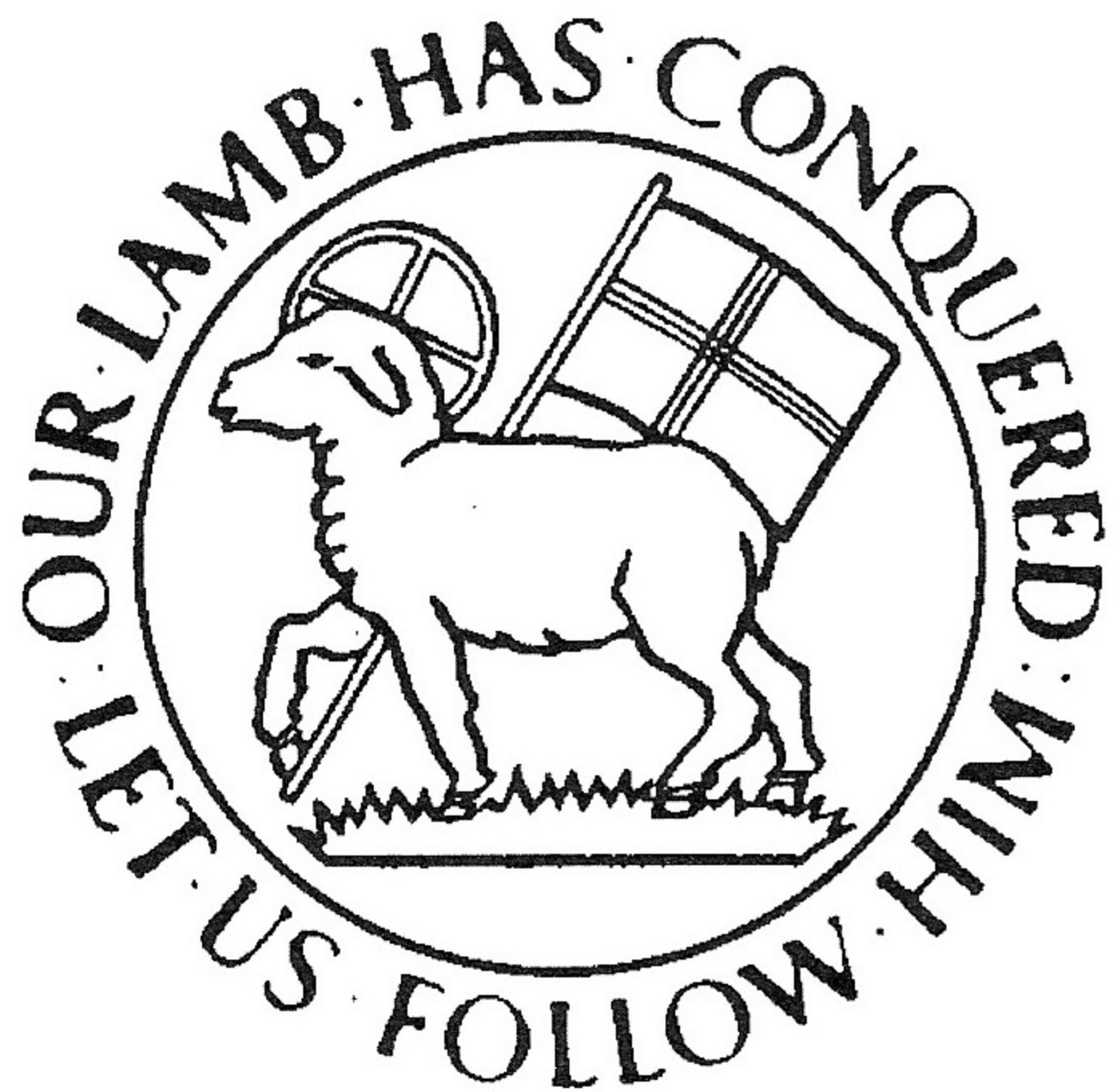


**WESTERN CANADIAN
MORAVIAN
HISTORICAL MAGAZINE**



**Volume 19 (April 2014)
“Our Children In Alaska”**

Memories of Rev. Clarence Henkelman and his years in Alaska

**Published by
CANADIAN MORAVIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Edmonton Chapter
2303-38 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T6L 4K9**

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FOREWORD

The entire content of this issue of the Canadian Moravian Historical Magazine, contains an account of the memories of the late Rev. Clarence Henkelman of the 30 years of missionary service which he and his wife, Pauline, gave to the work of the Moravian Church in Alaska starting in 1948. This is only the second time that an issue of the Magazine has been devoted to one topic. The other issue was the life and service of the late Rev. Dr. Kurt Vitt whose pastoral and teaching service included 14 years in Alaska as Director of the Seminary.

(While in Alaska Dr. Vitt collaborated with a member of the Henkelman family, James, to produce the encyclopedic 418 page historical account , “HARMONIUS TO DWELL” - The History of the Alaska Moravian Church 1885-1985).

The title of the Henkelman account, “Our Children in Alaska” has deep meaning in that it refers principally to the life of the Henkelmans during the 25 years they served at the Moravian Children’s Home , caring for and nurturing orphaned and neglected Alaskan native children . The Henkelmans love for the children in their care is evidenced in the many stories which are told about episodes of trials, tribulations, joys and successes in carrying out their duties under often trying and challenging conditions . These memories are rich in detail, filled with totally vulnerable accounts of Christ’s love in action in the multitude of ways the children in the Home were lovingly provided for.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of the authors of this book and their permission to reproduce it here. Bernice Henkelman Knutson wrote down the stories related to her by Clarence Henkelman. Joel Henkelman edited the work and added illuminating pictures. James Henkelman provided the Epilogue.

Wm. G Brese, Guest Editor

Post Script

The Henkelmans served for 30 years in Alaska, at the Children's home for most of the time. Then they came out of retirement in Seattle to engage in pastoral service at Dillingham, Alaska and other communities nearby, to cap off their missionary careers.

In 1969, I had the privilege to be part of a group of 9 Canadian Moravian volunteer workers from Edmonton and area who went to Dillingham Alaska for 3 weeks to work on the construction of the Moravian church, which at that time was being served by Rev Wilton Schwanke of Bruderheim and his wife Cecelia. The fourth week was spent at Bethel working on a Christian Education building with a side trip to the Children's Home near Kwethluk 25 miles up the mighty Kuskokwim River.

We embarked from Bethel on the Kuskokwim river with John Little at the helm of his "rusty" canoe carrying 4 Canadians with luggage . The canoe was powered by a Seagull 3 ½ Hp British made outboard motor, mounted on a transom, which John proudly stated, was actually able to put out 5 Hp.(John Little was the Field Warden of the Moravian church in Alaska and he had been supervising our construction work.)

When a radio report reached Clarence Henkelman at the Children's Home that we were on the river in a canoe headed his way, he dropped everything and immediately left for Bethel to save us from possible impending disaster. With his big boat operating at full throttle, he intercepted us as quickly as possible. Without any discussion with John Little, or without any comments of disapproval or retribution, we were swiftly moved into the Henkelman boat for a quick safe trip to the Home. John stubbornly chugged along by himself, seemingly oblivious to or unafraid of the dangers of that mighty river. He arrived at the Home considerably later. Thankfully the weather was favourable and he did not have to contend with turbulent water.

Pauline welcomed us warmly and provided a fine supper for us. Later, with the men in our group, I followed the established custom of visitors reading stories to the boys in their dorm at bedtime and praying with them as they prepared to go to sleep.

The next day, Clarence took us further upriver to the village of Tuluksak where a member of our group, Emily Henry (nee Schmidt), was to conduct Vacation Bible School for a week along with an Alaska missionary, Elfrieda Küerner. We stopped at fish camps along the way where Clarence announced that there would be a service at Tuluksak, at 3.00pm. Sometime after we arrived at the village, boats began arriving. In the small white church with the tall steeple, the women and children sat on one side and men on the other. Clarence conducted the service and baptized a number of children. After the service Clarence invited me to visit homes with him to provide communion to shut-ins.

This experience is indelibly engraved in my memory bank. I had experienced these faithful missionaries, Clarence and Pauline Henkelman, in action. It was a brief but vivid glimpse of their service to Christ and His church. Now, reading "Our Children in Alaska" gave me a wider perspective and brought back to me a flood of treasured memories.

WGB.

Our Children

in

Alaska



Memories of Rev. Clarence Henkelman and his years in Alaska

The Cry of the Alaskan Children

Far from the islands of Bering's dark sea
comes the sad cry of the children to me.
Help, in the Name of the Father of all,
give to us starving in body and soul.
Out of our misery gather us in.
Give us refuge from suffering and sin.

Author Unknown



Clarence and Pauline Henkelman heard the cry of the Alaskan children and responded. In 1948 they accepted the call to work as dorm parents at the boys dormitory, Moravian Orphanage, Alaska. The commitment was for two years, until long-term dorm parents could be found. Twenty-five years later they retired from what is now known as the Moravian Children's Home.

This short book is a compilation of stories of their experiences, both hardships and blessings, during those 25 years. The stories were told by Clarence Henkelman and written down by Bernice Henkelman Knutson. The writings were edited and photos added by Joel Henkelman. James Henkelman provided the epilogue. Bernice's time and efforts in pulling the document together are greatly appreciated. Joel Henkelman (jhenkelm@hotmail.com)

Arrival at Bethel

Below us wound a silver streak, the Kuskokwim River, on a tributary of which was located the Moravian Children's Home. "Honey, we're almost home," I said to Pauline as I squeezed her hand. We both peered eagerly out the window of the ten passenger plane as it began to descend and circle the community of Bethel. We had mixed feelings as we contemplated spending the next two years in such an isolated area, accessible only by plane or boat. We looked forward to our assignment to serve as house parents in the boy's dormitory at the Children's Home. A family of 17 boys seemed quite a challenge for a young married couple. How would we be accepted, we wondered.

As we surveyed the landscape below us, we were struck by the total absence of trees. Below us, the flat tundra stretched for miles. What a contrast to the snow-covered mountains and lush green valley's we had flown over as we left Anchorage. Now there seemed to be water, water everywhere! How could the pilot find a spot to land? Then we felt the familiar bump, bump and we coasted to a stop, none too soon. Right in front of us were the banks of the swiftly-flowing Kuskokwim River.

The only other passengers were a Federal Aviation worker from Bethel and his big dog. We had only a few personal belongings with us, the rest would come by steamer in September. It did not take us long to leave the plane and claim our baggage. Then the pilot quickly unloaded and headed back to Anchorage. I searched eagerly for familiar faces among the bystanders, but there was no

one there to meet us. I realized that I had not been specific as to our day of arrival, and this probably was the cause of our present predicament. The headquarters of Moravian Mission was in Bethel, but between us and the mission complex was a mile-wide river, the mighty Kuskokwim.

The airport was located on a large sand spit across the river from Bethel. The town of Bethel was located on a tundra and permafrost bluff on the opposite river bank. The spongy tundra created many construction and building challenges so the Army placed the airport on the sand spit. The airport had been built at the beginning of World War II by the US Army as part of a string of airports, across Alaska to provide forward support and communications in case of a Japanese invasion. The airports were also used in the US/Russian Lend Lease program which transferred US military aircraft to Russia in support of the WWII Allied efforts in Europe.

I walked to a spot just across from the mission, hoping I could somehow attract the attention of someone over there. I soon saw that was hopeless. Then the pilot of a small mail plane noticed us and offered to take us across the river. After seating us, he piled our baggage and all the mail around us. Loaded as heavily as it was, the plane could only get about fifty feet into the air, and we let out a sigh of relief as we coasted to a stop on the Moravian airstrip in the community of Bethel.

Here we found missionary staff awaiting our arrival with a half-ton jeep truck. There was laughter and rejoicing as we extricated ourselves from the mail plane and hopped into the waiting truck. As

we bumped along over the rough dirt road to the Drebert home we knew we had finally arrived. Soon we were enjoying the warm fellowship of the whole mission staff, as well as a good hot meal. What an unforgettable evening!

We had met Mr. Drebert before and admired him greatly. It was exciting to spend our first evening in their home. He was a native of Edmonton, Alberta, as we also were. He had spoken at our home church in New Sarepta on several occasions, as a visiting missionary. He was also a friend of my father. Mr. Drebert spoke the Yupik language fluently, and the Eskimos had a hard time remembering that this kindly little man was not "one of them". He had translated the New Testament into the Yupik language. It was his habit to rise at 6 am every day to read his Bible and pray. He was later appointed superintendent of the Alaska Mission.

While we visited with these friends, we had many questions to ask as we anticipated our move to the Children's Home the next day. The date was July 5, 1948. We had missed the July 4th festivities, always a big occasion in Bethel. The children from the Home had been brought down by barge and taken back the same day. Mr. Schattschneider, treasurer of the Alaska Moravian Mission was also helping out as houseparent to the boys until we arrived. He and Mr. Harry Trodahl, Superintendent of the Children's Home, arrived at the Drebert home later that evening and welcomed us with obvious relief.

That first evening we were advised that we must make out an order for groceries and other supplies for the coming year. The barge

would bring them up from Seattle in September. It seemed like an awesome task, but Mr. Drebert brought out the catalog from West Coast Grocery Company, and with his able assistance the job was done. When the order came, later in fall, we found no serious omissions. It was paid for by the Moravian Church, and we reimbursed them by means of deductions from our monthly salary. Our trunks, filled with personal belongings, arrived on the same steamer as our food in September. What an exciting day that was!

After a good night's sleep at the Drebert home we were eager to be on our way up the river. The Swan, a 35' boat owned by the Moravian Children's Home, pushing a 40' barge, was being loaded with supplies. The supplies had come in the spring from Seattle. While this was being done, we had a tour of the community of Bethel.

The mission headquarters consisted of the church and 7-8 well-built and freshly painted houses arranged neatly in a row. They were connected by a boardwalk and located on Mission Road which ran along the bank of the river. In years to come the buildings had to be relocated because of river bank erosion. A dike was also built later along the river as protection for the town. The white, green-trimmed buildings glistened in the morning sun. The other homes in the village were smaller and few of them were painted.

Perhaps the thing that most impressed the newcomer was that most buildings were up on stilts. This was necessary because the surface of the land was very spongy and unstable. The stilts or piles, were set through the tundra and into the permafrost, which was ice and

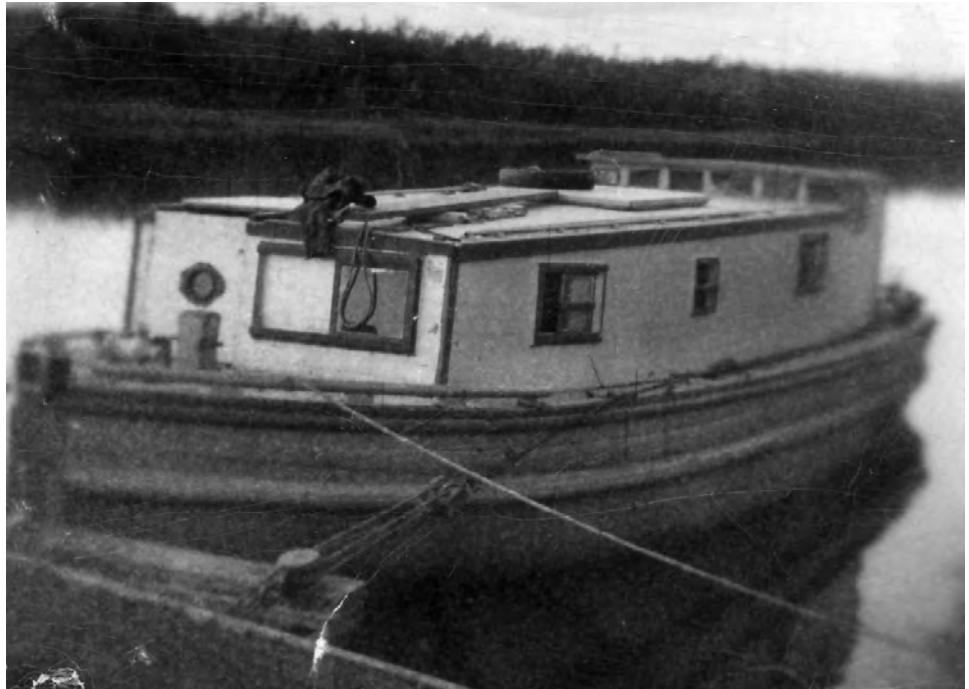
dirt, frozen year round, only 8-10 inches below the surface of the ground. Boats and other important equipment were stored under the house. Another thing that impressed one was the amazing number of empty 50 gallon oil drums scattered all over. Someone has said that these empty drums should have a place on Alaska's flag as one of the most common sights. As you may suppose, the permafrost makes basements and underground plumbing almost non-existent, even to this day.

At that time there was one large store along the river, the Northern Commercial Company, which served Bethel and outlying villages. There were three or four smaller, privately-owned stores as well, also a hospital, a school, a communications station, an Air Force base across the river, but no pubs or saloons. Bethel had been established by the Moravian missionaries in 1885, hence the Biblical name. Little did they dream what a thriving community it would be 100 years later. At this time it was still a small village.

The Trip Upriver

We made our way down to the riverbank and found it was time to leave. Our new friends from the mission were there to see us off. We clambered aboard the round-bottomed boat which had obviously seen better days! The barge it was prepared to push was heavily loaded with supplies for the Children's Home. We turned to wave our goodbyes as we began to move slowly upriver.

The Swan was the primary Home boat through the 40s' and into the 50s'. Used both to transport people and push the freight barge.



The Messenger (right) replaced the Swan in the early 50s'. It was faster but still proved effective as a pusher for the freight barge. Photo shows it loaded with passengers and mail, preparing for a trip upriver, back up river, to the Home.





The barge (left) is loaded with staff and children from the Home. It is being pushed by the Messenger on the way to a Sunday afternoon picnic and vespers at Birch Hill.

To this prairie farmer, the vastness of the river was awesome! Camera in hand, I scanned the riverbank as new and interesting sights met our eyes. We had smooth sailing but the Swan made slow progress because it was so heavily loaded. It took 4-5 hours to get to the Home, a distance of 25 miles. The farther we went, the more numerous the shrubs and trees became.

Mr. Trodahl told us about the points of interest all the way. A few miles out of Bethel we passed a little island. Douglas Schattschneider had once spent the night there during a storm. It has been called Schattschneider Island ever since. About a mile further upstream Missionary Schwalbe, superintendent of the Alaska Mission, met his death in 1935 when his small Ford truck broke through the ice. The water is usually rough in this area, we were told.

Seven or eight miles out of Bethel we passed The Bluffs. The riverbank here was about 50 feet above our heads with strips of turf and tundra up to 15 feet long hanging over the edge. The river had cut away the hill and large chunks of frozen dirt (permafrost) had fallen into the river. The sand from these chunks was forming sandbars on the other side of the river. This area provided good fishing, and we got a nice view of a couple of fish camps.

In spring, after school is out and the river breaks up, families move out of the villages for the summer to catch and process their winter supply of fish. Tents are pitched among the trees along a sandy beach. Racks are built of willow or alder on which to dry the fish in the sun. Children as well as adults work long hours, but still find time for fun. The days are long, and even though the water is cold, it is a common sight to see children playing and swimming in the river. Families return to the same camps year after year. It is their summer home, and they look forward to it as a happy time.

Out on the river, it was interesting to watch the fishermen at work. They were using nets. The string of floats, supporting the net, extended 100 or more feet across the river from each boat. Whenever a fish got caught, we could see the floats bob on the sparkling water. Periodically, the fish were taken to land where the women and children were waiting to clean them and hang them to dry. The men would then return to the fishing area, setting their nets in the current so that they would be carried down river and against the flow of the fish. The fishermen skillfully avoid the sandbars, and keep their boats moving just enough to stay abreast of the nets.

Back in camp, the fish that had dried for a couple of weeks was stored in a fish cache, a small building up on stilts. Metal is wrapped around the stilts to make it impossible for marauding animals to climb. During the long winter months, Eskimos will visit their fish caches as needed to bring the fish back to the village as food.

We learned all of this as we slowly made our way up the river to the Children's Home. There was a good supply of food on board and a gas stove for heating water or preparing canned food. I had my first taste of dried salmon on this trip. It looked like a piece of dried bark, but it had a pleasant smoked flavor. It became a favorite food to sustain me on long trips in later years.

A mile or so farther on we passed a much larger fish camp. People on the banks waved to us as we passed by. We quickly began to feel at home in this friendly environment. At one point Mr. Trodahl asked me to take the wheel while he went to help some of the boys up front. Now this farm boy didn't know a sand bar from a chocolate bar so you can guess what nearly happened! Let's just say that the boat didn't want to turn the way I wanted it to go. Mr. Trodahl had to come running back to get us straightened out. I quickly learned my first lesson in river navigation.

The Kuskokwim River was very muddy looking. As we approached the entrance to one of its tributaries, the Kwethluk River, the water became amazingly clear. This water comes directly from the mountains. The Children's Home is located on a neck of land that is

bordered by the clear Kwethluk River on one side and the muddy Kuskowim on the other. The Kwethluk River was the source of drinking water at the Home.

As we passed Kwethluk Village, we were told that we were only three miles from our destination. Mr. Drebert had built a cabin on the Swan that could hold about 30 people but we had spent very little time indoors on this trip.

Now Pauline and I moved to the best position to get our first view of our new home. Men from the Kwethluk fish camp were following us in their own boats to help unload the freight.

My camera was clicking furiously and there was a big lump in my throat as we rounded a bend in the river, and there it was! How amazing it was to find such huge buildings out here in the middle of nowhere. What dedication it had taken on the part of the pioneer missionaries who founded this place. Truly, the blessing of God must have been upon them. As we drew closer, the lump in my throat got bigger, and Pauline's eyes filled with tears, as we beheld all of the children as well as the staff lined up on the bank to welcome us. As we climbed up the bank, one child was heard to exclaim, "Ee! He's got white hair!" Blonde hair was not very common in Alaska. On the other hand, at my first sight of the children I thought they all looked alike, and I wondered how I would ever get to know them by name. However, it didn't take long before we could even tell them apart by their cries.



The Home is built between two rivers. In the photo, the river on the left, is the Kwethluk River and on the right is a slough off the Kuskowim River. The Kwethluk flows into the Kuskowim three miles downriver from the Home. This made for a pretty setting but could also cause problems during the spring breakup. Different ice jams could make the rivers rise at different rates. If the water was high enough and the difference in level was great enough it could wash through, across the Home campus.

Life Begins at Nunapitsinchak

The area in which the Home was located was the most beautiful spot we had seen so far in the Bethel area, and that's what the name Nunapitsinchak meant. Situated between the two rivers, surrounded by lovely evergreen trees, it truly was an inviting place to live.

We were taken to the boys' dormitory where we were to live. We were amazed at how spacious, clean and comfortable our suite appeared. It was so much better than we had expected. The woodwork was freshly varnished, the bed was made up with fresh linens, and the kitchen contained all the essentials. We were able to purchase the food left by the previous boys' counselor, and suffered no hardship while waiting for our supplies and trunks to arrive in September. There were two bedrooms, a little study, a large living room, and a bathroom. We were surprised, however, in an area where trees seemed so scarce, to find that both our cook stove and furnace burned wood.

That first night we were invited to eat with the Trodahl's. We felt immensely relieved to be at the end of our journey and ready to begin the work that God had called us to. We tried to absorb all the things we needed to know in order to successfully fill that position. Our heads were spinning as we returned to our suite.

We tried to unpack and settle in. However, we were the parents of 17 active boys (that number soon increased to 27) and they were anxious to get to know us. It was surprising how many sore fingers and toes appeared that first evening. It was also surprising how quickly the pain disappeared after a hug from Pauline and a word of sympathy. They had many questions, and it was a joy to be able to share with them. When it was time for them to go to bed we sang, read scripture and prayed with them.

I made the night-time rounds with Mr. Trodahl after the boys were in bed. We visited all the buildings as he explained the procedures

of checking doors and fires, shutting down the light plant and switching on the night lights which were ran on a 32-volt battery system. Little did I know that I would be doing this for the next 25 years.

The buildings were all located along a long boardwalk. The boys' dorm was a three-story building and our suite on the main floor overlooked the river. Across from the boys' dorm was a Quonset used for storing dried foods. A little cabin was next. It had been used as a guardhouse during World War II to protect from vandalism. The US Army barges were wintered there in the frozen river. It was given to the Children's Home, and later became known as the Honeymoon Cabin. It was used for awhile by a newly-married couple who came to help us. The powerhouse was next, and its two Hercules engines supplied lights for all of the buildings. Then came the superintendent's house where the Trodahl's lived. Across the boardwalk was the shop where boats were built and all types of repairs were accomplished. Behind the superintendent's house was a greenhouse, and next to that was the girls' dorm, another three-story building. At the time of our arrival there were 35 children in residence. Miss Connie Sautebin taught these children in the large classroom on the main floor of the girls' dorm. Down the hall from the classroom was the dining room where all the children ate. Individual staff members took turns supervising their meals, while the remaining staff ate in their own homes.

I slept rather restlessly that first night. What an awesome responsibility it would be to keep all that equipment in good repair in such an isolated area. We had done a lot of our own repairs on

the farm in Alberta, but this was different. We would probably have to order parts all the way from Seattle. There were sump pumps to keep the basements dry. Yes, these huge dormitories did have basements. Two commercial-size washing machines and a large spin type extractor to remove water from the freshly laundered clothes were located in the basement of the girls dorm. Several motorboats for summer travel, sleds for winter travel, and more than 20 dogs to pull the sleds had to be cared for. The light plants had to be checked hourly, to be sure they were functioning properly. Water had to be pumped from the river twice weekly, through about 1000 feet of pipe, into large storage tanks in the basement of each residential building. Above all, I knew it would require God's grace to direct the potential of the young lives entrusted to us into a personal relationship with the Savior, and to instill in them qualities of good, responsible citizenship. We quickly came to love them as "our family" and longed to exemplify the love of Jesus to them by our lives.

My thoughts were interrupted by lively thumping noises on our ceiling, telling us it was morning. I guess the boys were also having a bit of trouble sleeping. I had expected them to sleep until the rising bell at 7:00. I might as well get up and at it.

I dressed for work and stepped outside to survey the beauty of our surroundings. Yes, the native name Nunapitsinchak, meaning "Beautiful Valley" certainly was appropriate for this area. The Home was surrounded by trees, large for this area, and this morning they were filled with birds giving a wonderful concert of praise! The air was so fresh and clear, and as a flock of ducks flew by, I

turned to look at the river below. The lonesome call of a loon quavered on the air, and a fish splashed, sending circular ripples on the still-dark surface of the water. It was so peaceful and uplifting. My heart filled with thanksgiving to God for bringing us safely here, and for the privilege of serving Him in this place. The words of Numbers 23:19 came to me, "God is not a man....Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" Surely, we could trust Him for all our needs.

We were quickly initiated into the daily routines. There were also many special jobs to be done before the end of the short summer season. Many broken or cracked windows had to be replaced. Much sanding, varnishing and painting had to be done before school started again. We remodeled the closets in the dorms. Each child had a rod for hanging clothes with a shelf above it for personal use.

The staff was small, and without the help of the children we could never have managed. It proved to be good training for their future lives. Many went on to responsible positions later. Much organization and supervision went into the daily schedule. Children were assigned certain tasks or chores for a two week period and all had a chance to do the things they were able to do. The older girls also took turns serving as "staff girls", helping staff members with daily housework, thus freeing them for important duties elsewhere at the Home. It was an opportunity to have them learn skills in family living, as well.

Life Around the Clock

At the Home the girls did such things as baking bread, cleaning tables, washing dishes, sweeping, vacuuming and washing the floors in the girls' dorm, and helping with the laundry. That included sorting the clothes, hanging them outside if weather permitted or on lines in the basement. Then taking them down, folding and ironing them, ready to be returned to the right dorm. This all had to be supervised, of course.



Two large commercial sized washers were available in the basement of Girls Dorm for the washing of the children's clothes and bedding. Pauline Henkelman is shown here helping with the task.

Besides the cleaning and laundry, there were blueberries, cranberries and salmonberries to pick, clean and can. Salmon was a mainstay of the Home diet and over 700 quarts needed to be filled and processed for the coming winter.

Lest you think that the girls did all the work, the boys' daily chores were also many and varied. The long boardwalk outside had to be swept in summer and shoveled in winter, wood boxes for each furnace and cook stove had to be kept full. As furnaces and cook stoves were converted to oil, the fuel tanks for each stove had to be kept filled from 50 gallon barrels outside, using hand pumps. There was a three-hole building (out house) behind each dorm that had to be cleaned regularly. Because of permafrost, no pits could be dug, so these buildings were built high enough to accommodate three 50 gallon barrels side by side, and these had to be hauled away and emptied periodically. The older boys helped us do this. It was not an easy or pleasant task, but it was part of life in the Arctic. Fortunately we had many barrels so they could be left to air out. In the summer, much grass had to be cut with a scythe, gardens had to be planted and weeded, and wood cut for winter fuel. This was one of the more popular jobs with the boys. It was done with an improvised Model A Ford engine, using a home-made pulley to drive the buzz saw. Later in the fall, boys were assigned to split wood before and after school to feed those hungry furnaces.



Groceries and supplies were ordered once, then later, twice a year and arrived in Bethel, from Seattle on a steam ship (left).

The supplies were then moved up river, to the Home and other surrounding villages by river barge.



Salmon was a mainstay of the diet. Clarence is shown here with two truly king sized King Salmon destined for the dinner table.



The older boys and staff cleaned the catch.

The older girls helped process and jar the salmon. Up to 800 quarts of salmon were processed annually.



Some of the salmon was split and hung on racks to dry or was smoked.

Berries grew in abundance on the tundra and river banks near the Home. Many pails of berries were picked by children and staff.



The greenhouse provided a treat with tomatoes, cucumbers and other hot house products.

Award winning produce came from the gardens. This included turnips, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, potatoes, lettuce, radishes and more.



Ice cream was always a special treat. Two of the girls are seen here making ice cream with a White Mountain ice cream maker.



Fish provided our main source of protein, and it fell to the older boys to keep us supplied. That meant setting the net and checking it twice a day. They split and cleaned the fish, taking it to the girls' dorm for canning. During the summer we frequently enjoyed fresh salmon and canned or smoked what was left. We usually canned about 700 quarts a year, and staff members also canned what they wanted. We had more than 20 dogs to care for year round. They were our beasts of burden before the advent of snow machines and very important to our survival. Besides feeding and watering them, it was a problem to protect them from flies and mosquitoes, during the summer. Under the worst conditions the mosquitoes could cause death. Mosquito repellant was used around their eyes and noses. In the fall, gardens had to be harvested, and we tried to make the dormitories warmer by packing cut grass around the foundation, held in place with a rail fence made from fresh cut willows. The grass was cut with a scythe. It took a lot of grass, and a lot of willow rails for all the buildings.

The time was not all spent in working, however. In summer, every chance they got, the children would get out a sponge rubber ball and play their favorite game, Lapp Ball. This game was introduced to the Eskimos by the Laplanders who came to teach them reindeer herding. It was a simple game and required little equipment, but the children never seemed to tire of it. Two parallel lines were drawn on the ground and two teams chosen. Those who were up to bat had to line up behind one line. The other team positioned themselves in the "field", some near and some farther back. When the ball was hit, the batting team would try to cross the other line and get back without being hit by the ball which was thrown at them by whomever caught it.

We also had a teeter-totter, five swings, climbing bars, and a slide which was popular year round. There were lots of blueberries to pick and everyone enjoyed going to Blueberry Hill, about a mile behind the girls' dorm. In winter, this was a good hill for sledding. A skating rink was made every winter. The area flooded was in full view of the superintendent's house as well as the girls' dorm. The children were given sleds and toboggans for Christmas one year by the soldiers who were stationed at Bethel, and who enjoyed visiting at the Home. Women's organizations in the lower States kept us supplied with skates, and some creative children made their own. The children spent many enjoyable hours sledding or skating. On a regular basis we received educational movies which had been ordered the year before. These made a pleasant diversion, and also stimulated the children's interest in learning about new things and life in other parts of the world.

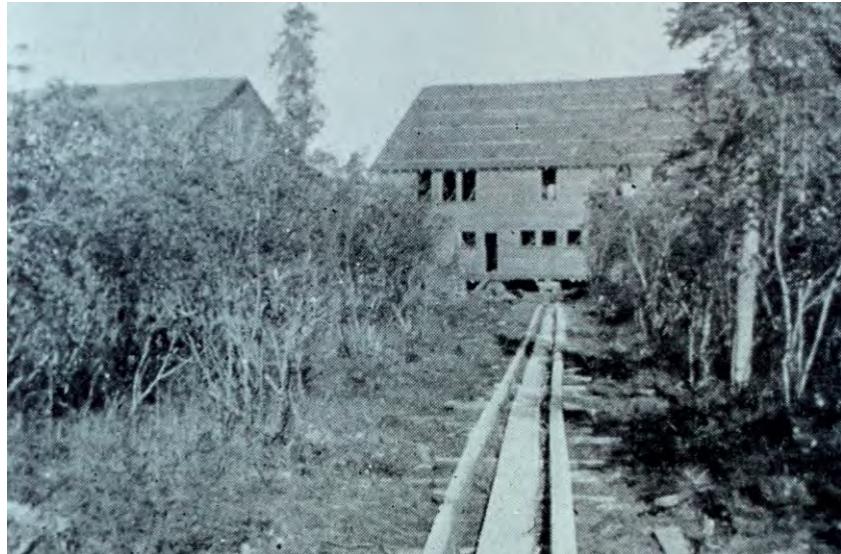
Summer activities were always very special. The summers were so short, so the season had to be enjoyed. Living in an area where so much of the travel was by water, it was very important for the children to learn to swim. Drowning accidents were frequent in Alaska. About one-half mile upriver behind the girls' dorm there was a sandbar. The water was shallower and warmer here, a good place to swim. We sometimes took the children there in the two boats we used for travelling - the Put-Put and the Messenger. Another favorite activity involved going by barge, to accommodate everyone, the three mile river trip to Birch Hill. This was the highest hill around. We often took the children up there for a picnic lunch on Sundays. Before returning to the Home in late afternoon, we would have a worship service with lots of singing and sharing. It was such a beautiful setting, with a view for miles over the river! All year long , staff members took turns supervising playtime after supper until bedtime. There were always meaningful activities going on.

A Brief History

Perhaps you are wondering how the Children's Home came to be founded. From the first days of the Alaska Moravian mission work in 1885, the missionaries took needy children into their homes and tried to provide for their care and education. The mission ran a boarding school in Bethel, the only school in the area, until 1913. Then the government brought in a full-time teacher and rented the school facility from the mission. Thus the public school system was begun. However, the need to provide for the numerous orphans resulting from influenza and tuberculosis epidemics, prompted the

founding of a program called the Orphanage. For approximately 10 years they were housed in buildings in Bethel but the need for better facilities increased. It was finally decided to build an Orphanage and Manual Training School on the Kwethluk River, halfway between Bethel and the village of Akiak.

A clearing was made and construction began in July, 1925. Lumber and other building materials had to be brought up by barge from Bethel. At the site, a narrow trail was cut through the brush, and labeled "Hallelujah Avenue". Along this trail was carried all the supplies from the river to the building site. The prevalence of mosquitoes caused the workers to dub the cleared building site "Skeeter Square". Nothing daunted these eager workers. By working long hours they were able to complete the superintendent's house and the girls' dormitory, taking in the first students by January of 1926. That next summer the buildings were painted and a long boardwalk was built down "Hallelujah Avenue" past the buildings.



Initial construction was completed during the summer of 1925. It included the Girls Dorm, at the end of the walk. Also completed was the Superintendent's house, left side of photo.

Construction continued over the next few years with additional clearing of the trees, the construction of a boardwalk and a shop. Shop is seen in the right side of the photo.



This photo was taken in front of the Girls Dorm, facing west. It shows the Chapel, built in 1955 and the Boys dorm.



Meanwhile, the Lord was preparing me in many ways, which I only realized later, for my part in this mission venture. During my years as a student at Prairie Bible Institute in Alberta, I was privileged to hear many missionary speakers who told of crying needs around the world. Later, I shared my concern for world missions with my fiancé, Pauline Busenius. We went to hear Oswald Smith speak in Wetaskawin. His message on the feeding of the 5000 challenged us both, as he reminded us that Jesus didn't keep feeding the front row at the expense of the others. He gave an invitation at the close for all who would like to commit their lives for missionary service, and we both went forward. We told friends in the Moravian Church of our commitment, and Rev. Samuel Wedman spoke of the need for workers in Alaska. To my surprise, Pauline exclaimed, "That's something I have always wanted to do!"

Shortly after this, on a rainy day in June, 1946, we were married in the New Sarepta Moravian Church. We traveled in two separate cars to the church, through six miles of gumbo. One car got stuck in the mud, so the whole wedding party crowded into one car. We got to the church on time, and Pauline was a beautiful bride. The weather didn't dampen our spirits, as we committed our vows in loving service to each other and to our Lord. Sadly, my father had passed away just two months before our wedding, but he was very fond of Pauline and approved of all our plans. We made our way back over that muddy road to the Henkelman home for a lovely hot meal shared by family and friends. Part of the house was remodeled for our use and I continued to work the home farm for the next two years. We had a lovely two-week honeymoon in the Jasper and Banff areas of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, getting home just as our money ran out.

A year after our marriage, Rev. Wedman, superintendent of the Canadian District Moravian Church, asked if we'd be willing to serve for two years as house parents in the boys' dormitory at the Children's' Home in Alaska. After careful consideration and much correspondence with the Moravian Society for Propagating the Gospel (Mission Board), we consented. We spent the next year getting the farm in good shape, gathering together the things we might need in Alaska, and preparing ourselves for this important life-changing move. We made sure we purchased plenty of mosquito repellant and netting. I was also advised that I would definitely need a pair of hip-waders, so I hunted until I found some. I tried the left one on and it fit fine. The clerk packed them up for me and I went home, pleased with my purchase. I didn't unpack them until I got to Alaska. To my surprise and disappointment I found I had two boots for the left foot, and none for the right.

The Canadian Moravian Young People's camp was in session at Camp Van-Es, about 20 miles out of Edmonton, the week that we left for Alaska. As we waited for our flight to take off at the airport in Edmonton, many of the campers and pastors came to see us off. Our plane was several hours late, but most of them stayed with us until we finally took off at midnight. What a comfort that was, as it was our first experience in flying. We landed in Fort St. John briefly, and then continued on to Fairbanks. We were informed that there were no flights to Bethel for a week. We stayed in a hotel overnight and caught a flight to Anchorage next morning. After another overnight stop, we were able to get a flight to Bethel.

Our Life at the Home

And now life had settled into routine at the Children's Home. Pauline, with her warm and outgoing personality, soon won the hearts of all the boys in our care. They would often come in and share their heartaches and get a reassuring hug. During the first six years of our extended stay in Alaska, we lived in the boys' dorm. Pauline was always present to take care of the immediate needs, and the boys could run to her as to their mother. Besides the emotional needs there was a lot of hard physical work to be done. She had trouble with her legs and often grew weary, but she carried bravely on. She always washed the sheets and pillowcases for the boys' beds, more than twenty of them! Their other clothes were washed in the girls' dorm. When they were returned, it fell to Pauline to sort all the clothes and place them on shelves in the hall closet. The door to this closet was kept locked until bath night- Wednesday and Saturday nights. Then she would hand each boy a complete set of clean clothes to put on his bed until after his bath. The boys were constantly growing, which kept Pauline constantly busy altering the length of their pants. On our first furlough, she was given a portable electric sewing machine, a big improvement over her old treadle machine.

On August 19, 1949, an exciting announcement came over the radio: "Joel Clarence Henkelman, firstborn son of Clarence and Pauline Henkelman, was born today in Bethel Hospital" I could hardly wait till morning to go to see them. That was the slowest boat trip to Bethel I ever experienced! At last I reached the hospital and proudly beheld our very own son. Pauline had gone in ahead of

time and stayed with the Dreberts for a week or so. During that time, there was a very bad storm. The waves undercut the banks of the river, and several small buildings within sight of the Drebert home were washed away. It was a terrifying sight! Fortunately, the Mission buildings had been moved back from the riverbank and no damage was sustained. When Pauline and the baby came home there was much excitement at the boys' dorm. He really got a royal welcome.

Our second son, Jim, was born on October 27, 1951. The hospital in Bethel had been destroyed by fire and a couple of army Quonset buildings were fixed up as an emergency hospital. It was extremely crowded, and Jim's first bed was a bathtub. Earl Shay, the pastor in Bethel, contacted us by ham radio to tell us of Jim's arrival. Fortunately, he was a healthy baby, and Pauline was doing well, because they were sent home on the second day to make room for others. The hospital was so overcrowded. They were brought to Kwethluk Village by plane. The river had been frozen over and we had pulled our boats up on land. The weather changed and the ice broke up, but it took time to get a boat back in the water after getting the unexpected message that my family was landing on a sandbar at Kwethluk! Before I got there I met native Pastor Alex Nicori bringing them up in his little, open boat. It was cold, and they had to dodge ice chunks as they made their way to the Home. I turned around and followed them in. So Jim was off to an adventurous start, and took it all in stride. We gave thanks to God for His protecting care.

Our third son, Dale, was born in the newly reconstructed hospital in Bethel, shortly after we returned from our first furlough. The date was August 28, 1955. We had just moved into the Superintendent's house. I had taken over as Childrens' Home superintendent and itinerant pastor for four of the area villages. Joel and Jim, 6 and nearly 4, were not allowed to visit in the hospital. I held them up outside the window so they could see their mother and their baby brother in the bassinet beside her. A few days later there was a happy reunion. The boys did their best to help entertain baby brother.

The boys certainly did not lack for friends and playmates, growing up at the Children's Home. They also learned to be responsible as they worked and studied along with the other children. We did not have TV, and I'm sure that was a blessing! Because we lived in such an isolated area, our trips out of Alaska were enjoyed all the more. All in all, those were happy years for our family. My only regret is that I was kept so busy. I seemed to have so little time to enjoy them. I felt I had to be so careful not to show favoritism that they probably got the short end of the stick many times. However, they were all a source of pride and joy to us. They grew up to be fine, Christian young men.

The Challenges

When we first came to Alaska in 1948, we were informed by the public health nurse that 50% of the people in Bethel had active tuberculosis. She cautioned us not to visit in the homes because of the danger of carrying it back to the children. I found this

disappointing. I had hoped to be able to minister to people in the villages. It was a great day for Alaska when a medication that proved helpful in curing TB was discovered.

I visited a fish camp shortly after we got to Alaska. I was taken to see a mother who was dying of TB. She was lying on a grass mat inside a small tent, a pitiful sight - nothing but skin and bones - with deeply sunken eyes. She asked if we could take her children and care for them. She knew that both she and her husband were dying of the dreaded disease. After careful consideration, the staff decided to admit the two older children, leaving the baby with his grandmother. We did not have enough staff or equipment to care for babies.



Children often arrived with severe physical, and spiritual needs. A few years, in the caring environment of the Home made a big difference.



The river bank, in back of photo, was great for sledding. Cracker Jacks were also a favorite.



A little music before bed was a regular treat.

At first we tried to treat all the children alike, but we soon found that they had widely differing temperaments that required special consideration. One boy could not take correction and would disappear into the woods until we would finally go and search for him. Like as not, we would find him crying behind a stump! Others needed firm correction and might not even hear a gentle reprimand. Others needed much repetition, or the security of that much attention.

One clever young fellow became very adept at avoiding work. He purposely moved very slowly as he performed the chores assigned to him for the day. If he was to help bring wood from the far end of the campus he chose to walk down the long boardwalk instead of riding as the other boys did. A wagon with a rack on it pulled by

our small Ford tractor, or a bobsled pulled by dog team were the usual means of hauling the wood. While he very slowly made his way down the long boardwalk to the woodpile, the boys had nearly finished loading the wood. He put a stick or two on the load as his contribution before it left for the girls' dorm. Then he began the long, slow walk back down the boardwalk, arriving when the boys had nearly finished unloading the wood and sending it down the chute into the basement of the girls' dorm. While the other boys sweated away, he mostly had a good time walking back and forth. He was well liked, however, and able to take a joke on himself. He had quite a flat nose and very chubby cheeks. One day at the table some boys had fun laying a table knife across his cheeks. Another day, as he was helping a staff member in the garden, he innocently asked, "Has slavery not already been abolished in Alaska?"

We received a family of four children from a coastal village who all had active TB. The hospital was full and they had nowhere to go. The doctor said the two boys must be isolated. They were so bad that even the roots of their teeth were exposed. Two or three months later the doctor examined them and they were so much improved that they no longer needed to be isolated. In time even their gums were healed over.

When INH was discovered as a cure for TB, we used it to treat the children at the Home. Pauline put the medication in little paper cups and those who needed it would take it after breakfast. All of the children took a tablespoon of cod-liver oil each morning. The children at the Home were the healthiest children in the whole area. We had an experience related to this that was both frustrating and

encouraging. We took some of the children by dog team to Bethel to see the doctor. She was so busy that we were not able to get in. We sat and waited until 5 o'clock. Finally she sent the nurse to check the children. She found our children were so much better off than the others . She advised us just to go home and carry on. We left for home about 6 P.M. The children snuggled down into their sleeping bags for the long ride home. As the moon arose, bathing the countryside with soft light, the dogs raced eagerly over the sparkling snow. It was good to know our efforts were apparently succeeding.

Most of the children came to us out of sad situations. When we received a request from a widow to come for her three children, I went to Bethel to pick them up. She was living in a small tent for the summer. There was only one single cot on which they all slept. The floor was wet from recent rain, so they kept their feet up on the cot to stay dry.

We admitted a brother and sister in mid-winter who had no shoes - just some canvas tied around their feet. The boy's arm had been broken and allowed to heal without being set. He had to live with a crooked arm all his life.

Another boy came to us with a collapsed lung due to TB. We were told that he should do no lifting or heavy work. We tried to keep him as quiet as possible but he would become depressed if he couldn't do what the other children did. He even wanted to play ball. A few years later x-rays showed that he was in good health.

He went on to live a normal life. He married one of the girls from the Home and they had a family of three children.

Another little fellow came to us from a village on Nunavak Island. A doctor had found him tied to a chair. He was so hyperactive his parents didn't know what to do with him. His arms were raw from being tied. He was undernourished and small for his age. In fact, we had no clothes small enough for him, and had to go to town and buy some. The doctor said his failure to grow was probably caused by deep frustration. "Just treat him normally," he advised, "and let him play." He certainly was overactive! Once when the children were sliding on Blueberry Hill, I watched him. He took his sled and whizzed down to the bottom, grinning from ear to ear. Then he started to climb, but was too excited to go to the top. Halfway up he jumped on his sled and coasted down to the bottom again. He repeated this over and over. He had a good sleep that night. It was amazing how much he had grown in two or three months. He is now a healthy man, over 6 feet tall!

Six children were brought to us by a distraught father after his wife committed suicide. The couple had an argument and she took poison to end her life. She died in the arms of her second oldest daughter. For a long time this girl would have spells when she would almost go into a coma, or act as if she were dying. Gradually she became better, and I believe she is now happily married. All six of the children were so beautiful and talented. Whenever possible, the father came to visit them, a very sad man.

Early one morning a plane circled the Home to let us know it was coming in for a landing. Without any warning, a social worker disembarked with five children and all their pets. A tragedy had occurred. Their father had gone to Anchorage to shop for a little store that they ran, and when he came home his wife shot him as he entered the door. She was incarcerated for 6 weeks. Then one day she appeared to claim her children. We had to let them go because the court had not acted to award custody. They acted quickly, however, and the children were sent to live with the father's brother in Pennsylvania.

We were asked to take a 13 year old girl who had run away from many foster homes. She was fighting addictions to drugs and alcohol. At first we could get very little response from her. Whenever I tried to talk to her she was very withdrawn and would just hang her head. Then one day we finally had a breakthrough. She suddenly stated, "Those red curtains in the girls' dorm remind me of blood, and I can't sleep." I prodded her for an explanation and found that she had had a terrible experience when she was a little girl. She and her older sister were asleep one night . The older girl was awakened by a noise in the kitchen. She woke her little sister and asked her to go and turn on the kitchen light. Still half asleep, she stumbled into the kitchen, and just before she reached the light switch, she stepped in something wet. As the light came on she was horrified to see her father lying on the floor in a pool of blood. Someone had stabbed him and run away. He was taken to hospital and survived, but the poor girl was haunted by the memory. Once she began to talk about it, she was able to put it behind her, and began to improve. I asked the staff to put up different curtains in the girls' dorm.

Nearly all of the children who came to us were very concerned about death and dying. As soon as possible, we would discuss the subject with them and present the way of salvation. As they asked Christ into their lives, His love made all the difference. How sad that so many children do not know where to go for this comfort, even in good homes.

Not all of our stories are success stories, by any means. The case of a boy with a heart murmur comes to mind. He came to us when he was 5-6 years old. An earlier bout with rheumatic fever had left his heart in a damaged condition. The doctor said he probably wouldn't live to be 20. He stayed with us for many years, and we definitely favored him. He was small for his age, and took advantage of the extra attention. He became very cocky. When he was about 15 he ran away. It was late one Sunday afternoon during the winter. I had just come home from a service in one of the villages, and was very tired. We hooked up the dog team and taking one of the older boys with me started off in pursuit. We followed his tracks on the river for a couple of hours. He had passed Kwethluk village and the next settlement was Bethel, about 17 miles away. I was afraid he would not make it. He wandered into two or three fish camps and out again at the other end. The dog team could not pull the sled through the dense shrubbery, so I asked my helper to hold them while I followed his tracks. It was dark, and I had only a flashlight to guide me. These camps are deserted in winter, of course, and the boy said later that he hardly knew where he was going. After returning to the river farther down I had to signal to the boy holding the dogs and wait for them to catch up to me. We finally reached Bethel. Now that I knew he was safe, I tied up the dogs outside the empty cabin

which we used as our motel when in Bethel, made a fire to warm up and went to bed. The next day I found him at his uncle's place. "Do you want to stay here or come back with me?" I asked. His immediate reply was, "I wanna come back home with you." He stayed with us one or two more years. When he was 20 or 21 he was struck by a car and killed while crossing a busy street in Anchorage. The doctor's prediction was right, but it was not his heart condition that caused his death, after all.

Then there was Mikey, a friendly, outgoing little fellow from Bethel. Nobody seemed to know where he came from, but everybody knew him. He called everyone in Bethel by their first name. The social worker was paying a common-law couple to take care of him. He checked one day, and they hadn't seen him for several days, and apparently didn't bother to look for him. He was found sleeping under an overturned boat. He stayed with us for several years. The sanitation engineer at the Bethel Hospital and his wife got to know him and asked to have him spend weekends with them at their home in Bethel. Soon they asked to adopt him. He had a good home with them finishing high school and one or two years of college. He was attacked in Anchorage by three guys who were on drugs as he was walking down C Street. They stabbed him 50 or more times and threw his body into the woods. The police were unable to solve the crime. Two years later, the killers were bragging about the incident in a bar and were arrested.

Travel on the Kuskokwim was always associated with a degree of hazard. In summer, boats were our only means of travel unless we wished to charter a plane, which was very expensive. The

Messenger, our main boat for travel, had a 60 hp Chris-Craft engine. We also used it for freighting, pushing our barge loaded with wood in the spring, freight from Seattle in spring and fall, and drums of oil in summer. When we wanted to go out for a picnic, everyone could ride on the barge, pushed by the Messenger.

Winter Challenges

Winter travel in those early years was usually by dog team. We had three teams and several sleds. The dogs were used to take the children to the clinic in Bethel, to haul wood, to go to the village for mail, and for village pastoral work. Travel by dog team was difficult but enjoyable. The days were so short that much of our travel in winter was after dark. The dogs were usually good at finding their way home, but it was always tricky getting through portages, avoiding stumps which could break the sled. It was entirely up to the driver to guide the sled around curves. On moonlit nights it was much easier and more pleasant. What a sight it was when the trees were covered with heavy hoarfrost, glistening in the moonlight. The silence seemed so deep and awesome. The only sound was the squeak of the sled runners as we skimmed over the snow. Sometimes the dogs would quicken their pace, and I would wonder why. The answer became apparent farther along as we met another dog team. The dogs provided companionship on those long, lonely trips, something that I missed when snow machines took over. In a way, they were more reliable, too, because I never needed to worry about running out of gas or having engine problems. Snow machines did have other advantages, however. They didn't need to be fed in summer, they could go much faster, and could be steered while sitting comfortably.

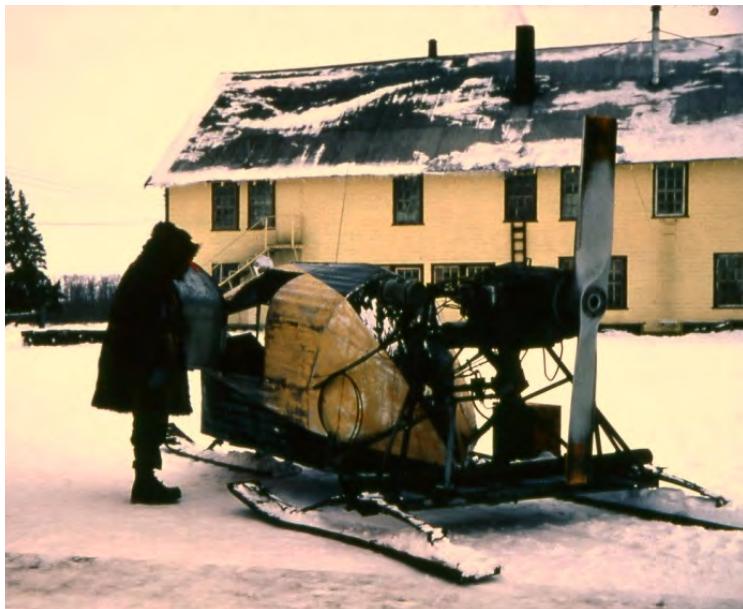
Our first machine was made with an aircraft engine - a 115 hp Lycoming engine with a pusher prop, behind a 4+ person cab, mounted on three large skis. The children called it "Mr. Henkelman's Hotrod". Mr. Schattschneider called it "the sneeze buggy". It had good headlights, and also had a spotlight which I could train on the riverbank or turn in any direction I wished. When we parked we covered it with a blanket and canvas and set a catalytic heater under the engine so that it would start more easily in the cold. Instead of taking 3 hours to go to Bethel we could now make it in an hour.

In the 60's, snow machines with air-cooled engines became available for about \$1000. Dr. Schmidt in Bethel donated a Skidoo to the Children's Home. We also bought one for our family. A gallon of gas would go a long distance. The snow machines revolutionized the lifestyle of Alaskans in our area. It was possible to go 40mph pulling a dogsled with passengers. It brought the villages together for song services and other functions.



Before the advent of snow machines, dog teams were the primary source of winter travel. Clarence Henkelman (left) is on his way to one of the 'up-river' villages for which he had pastoral responsibilities.

Dog Team travel in spring was hazardous. Spring thaw and additional water in the river caused the center ice to float. The high water lifted the center ice away from the anchor ice along the edge.



The air sled snow machine (left), also called the "sneeze buggy," soon became a preferred method of travel. It was significantly faster than a dog team. Shown here is Clarence Henkelman getting ready for a trip.

Winter travel for large groups was frequently done with the Ford tractor pulling a large sled or wagon. The tractor, in front of one of the mission houses in Bethel, is loaded with staff and children.



Charter airplanes were often used, particularly during the fall and spring seasons, when the river was too dangerous for travel. The airplane (right) while visiting the Home in early spring, caught a ski and flipped during takeoff. No one was injured.



In winter, the river becomes a frozen highway. There are very few miles of roads in the Kuskokwim area. People can hardly wait to get out on the river. Some spots can take a month to 6 weeks longer to freeze over, due to eddies and strong currents in the river. This can happen near sandbars or where two streams meet. Many people have lost their lives by going out on the river too soon. It was always a time of concern, that the children would go out on the ice before it was safe. When transportation was needed we would usually charter a small plane to come and pick us up. There would usually be other business to attend to during the charter trips. The pilots would fly along the river and we could chart the open spots. About two weeks later, I would visit those spots by dog team and test the ice with an electrician's bit to be sure it was at least 10 inches thick. Then I knew it would be safe for snow machines and winter travel.

We nearly had a terrible catastrophe one day. A small plane came up to the Home and landed on the ice, bringing a mother to visit her children. As she got out of the plane about 25 children ran out to

meet her. The ice cracked right across the river! The pilot saw the water coming up under the plane. He shouted, "Get off the ice! It's cracking!" The children got off just in time and the plane was able to take off. That was a lesson we all remembered.

One day I asked the boys to haul some grass. The river was just beginning to freeze over, but it definitely was not safe to go on it. They hitched up nine dogs - I usually used seven - and they took off. The dogs were used to heading for the river, and I stared in horror and disbelief as I saw what was happening. I dashed after them, adding my shouts to theirs as they screamed, "Haw! Haw!" Fortunately, the lead dog obeyed and swung left. Before I could reach them, the boys guided the team onto a little pond that was solidly frozen. The dogs continued to go round and round the pond until I could help the boys to stop them. Had the dogs headed onto the river they most certainly would have perished, and worse still, the boys likely would have followed them.

Spring was always a dangerous time for travel. One day I had to take 17 or 18 children to Bethel for x-rays. I drove our little Ford tractor, pulling a wagon in which the children were riding. We had a good trip, but a day or so later I went back by dog team and found a wide open stretch of water on the part of the river we had crossed! How I thanked the Lord for His protection.

Another year I was returning from Bethel by dog team. It was a nice spring afternoon. There was water on top of the ice but it was still solid underneath. We called that "anchor ice". When I was nearly home I broke through the anchor ice, and the ice cold water

came up to my armpits. I managed to pull myself out, but of course the water started to freeze immediately. Some of the boys came running down to meet me, and I shouted, "Take care of the dogs!" and took off for the house to get into some dry clothes and warm up.

In the late 60's, I was going to Bethel in the "Sneezebuggy", accompanied by Jean Trodahl, daughter of the former superintendent, who had returned to teach at the Home. It was a cold day - subzero temperature - but the trip was going fine. We crossed a sandbar, and then - as we returned to the river ice - it happened! The "shell ice" or top layer broke, and we began to sink. I immediately shut off the motor to prevent the propeller from hitting the ice and breaking. I knew that the anchor ice was below us, but Jean thought it was the end. To make matters worse, it happened to be right near the spot where her Grandpa Schwalbe had drowned in 1935. The water was coming into the cab, and Jean crawled up onto the gas tank at the back with her feet on the seat to keep dry. I had to leave her while I went for help. As I crawled out the machine, I sank up to my waist in icy cold water. I saw two snow machines about a mile across the river, heading for Bethel. I ran and shouted but they did not see and soon disappeared from sight. I kept going, wondering if I could make it to Bethel, but soon I saw two other snow machines coming our way from Bethel. This time we were noticed, and fortunately the men had a rope. As they pulled us out, the water was running out the sides of our machine, but even though the carburetor had been submerged, it started as soon as I turned the key! We were soon in Bethel where kind Mission friends took care of our needs.

Breakup and Spring

The time of the spring breakup, when the river ice would move out, was always exciting. Then for a time we were unable to travel, a cause for concern for the grownups. As the days grew longer and warmer, water formed on top of the anchor ice at both sides of the river. We knew it was just a matter of time before the anchor ice would start to go. We set up a tripod on the ice with a flag on top, clearly visible from the campus. The night before we expected it to happen, we opened a 50 pound keg of wieners. They were packed in brine to preserve them, so they had to be soaked in fresh water. After that they tasted just like fresh wieners. As soon as the ice started to move, it was time for a celebration. Down to the riverbank we all trouped with our wieners and sticks. Someone got a bonfire going and we enjoyed our first picnic of the year while watching the ice go by. Big chunks would pile up until the force of the water would send them all crashing down, a source of much enjoyment for the children.

The Kwethluk River always broke up first. We were only 75 miles from its source, but 500 miles from the source of the Kuskokwim. Since the Kwethluk River was narrower the ice thawed more quickly. We always waited with baited breath for the Kuskokwim breakup usually about 10 days later. That's when we could expect floods. Every year we witnessed a strange phenomenon. The course of the Kwethluk River would reverse when the Kuskokwim broke up. The two streams merged just beyond the Children's Home, and since the Kwethluk had nowhere else to go, it would back up, bringing Kuskokwim ice with it. It was an eerie feeling to

look out one morning and see the river flowing by the opposite way. Then as the ice cleared out of the big river, it was free to reverse its course and return to normal.

After the long winter, we rejoiced to have spring again. The children kept busy playing marbles or sailing little boats which they made out of sticks. They would pound a little nail into the front of their boats and tie a string on it. Then they would run happily along the stream, pulling their little boats behind them. A group of children would be gathered at a sandy spot to tell stories. Using their "story knife" they would smooth the sand and then begin drawing pictures as they told of some experience. This was a favorite pastime of young and old. Even those who were shy loved to take part, almost as if their "story knife" were telling the tale. In the distance we might hear an occasional shot. Hunting season was not open, but it was a matter of survival after the long, cold winter, and the Eskimos were careful to kill only what they needed, and did not waste anything. The honking of geese and the quacking of ducks let us know that summer was on the way

One of the first outings after the river ice went out was to fish for smelt. We loaded the children on the barge, usually putting a tarpaulin up like a tent at the back of the barge. We took our wiener sticks along, and after we had caught all the fish we wanted, dipping them out of the river with nets, we pulled over to shore. After starting a fire we toasted these little fish like wieners. The children loved it. We always had lots to take home. We enjoyed several meals and smoked the rest.

Soon it was time to work up and plant the garden. The tractor was used to plow the soil, and as soon as it was warm enough the seeding was done. The children who wanted to participate in the 4-H program were each assigned a plot of ground for their own garden. The older children had a space 20' by 20' - the younger ones 10' by 10'. They were responsible to plant and care for their own vegetables. In the fall we would take them to Bethel to sell the vegetables they grew. The hospital and many private homes were always happy to get such nice, fresh vegetables. After selling their vegetables the next stop was always the Bethel store where they got to spend their hard-earned money.

We had a large garden for the Home. Because of permafrost, root vegetables did not do as well. We did grow good turnips and fair potatoes. Tomatoes and cucumbers had been started indoors in February and transplanted into the greenhouse in late March or early April. We heated the greenhouse with the aid of a woodstove made from a 100 gallon drum partly dug into the ground. One winter a heavy fall of wet snow caused the greenhouse to collapse. We had no tomatoes or cucumbers that year. We ordered corrugated fiberglass panels from Seattle and built a new one for the following year.

Summer

Summer was always very busy. There were always more tasks than days to do them in. A week or two after the smelt fishing was completed, the king salmon run started. This was our main source

of protein, and the ladies and girls usually canned about 700 jars for the Home. In addition, staff families canned some for themselves. It was the boys' job to set the net, check and clean it every day. They would clean the fish at an outside table and take it in to those who were ready to can them. The jars had to be processed in a hot water bath for four hours, a big job. The end product was much enjoyed by all. Some of the fish was made into "strip". A heavy salt brine was prepared, in which a potato would float. The slabs of salmon were cut into narrow strips and soaked in the brine for six hours. Then it was smoked in the smoke house for 2 weeks. The average weight of a king salmon was 20-25 pounds. However, we caught one fish that weighed 55 pounds.

In summer we would catch dog salmon. They earned that name because the quality of the meat was not as good as the king salmon and they were commonly used to feed the dogs. In August the silver salmon came . They were all good, edible food. In fall the village people sometimes brought us a quarter of moose, if they had more than they needed. It was a welcome change from fish. We would grind the hind quarter and mix it with ground salt pork for hamburgers. When we had enough, we would can it. It made good sandwiches. We also got reindeer meet from Nunavak Island.

July 4th was always a big day. The first few years we took the children to Bethel with the barge, to enjoy the festivities. It was difficult to get them together for the trip home and was dangerous travelling after dark. We decided to have celebrations at the Children's Home. They were allowed to invite their friends and relatives. It became such a popular event that we soon had bigger

crowds than Bethel. We had up to 500 people attend. For one thing, our meals were cheaper than Bethel's. Huge pots of pork and beans were prepared as well as potato salad and other things. Then, too, our day was more family oriented because no liquor was served or allowed. We had many contests and races such as wheelbarrow race for mothers and daughters, thread the needle for husbands and wives, pie eating contest (without the use of hands), ladies' hammer and nail contest - in which they raced to drive a big spike into a long plank - and one race that they really enjoyed called "men's dress up". It was surprising how many strange-looking hats were sent to the Home as donations, not to mention high heeled shoes, clothes that were too fancy for our needs. In this race, the men lined up along one line facing their wives who had the clothes and were waiting to help them dress. They laughed so hard as they helped them into fancy dresses, complete with hat and shoes, that they could hardly do the job! Then the men had to run back to the finish line in their high-heeled shoes. It really was hilarious! We had rented Christian movies to show at the close of the festivities. Sometimes I had to show it four times so that everyone could get in to see it. All in all, it really was a "fun day", and we all looked forward to it each year.



July 4th flag raising.



July the 4th. Pie eating contest. What fun!

The First Furlough

We worked at the Children's Home for six years before we got our first furlough. By that time I was more than ready for a holiday. In fact, the change was a shock to the system and it took some time to adjust to a different lifestyle. I had written to a Christian in Anchorage for help in finding a reliable, low-priced car. He had left before we got there, leaving a message that he hadn't been successful in finding what we needed. I asked our banker for suggestions and he recommended Alaska Sales and Service. I told the salesman I had \$1200 to spend and wanted a reliable car for driving down the Alaska Highway. He pointed to a Buick, saying, "That's your car!" I thought the transmission sounded a little growly but he assured me that that's the way a Buick sounded.

The next morning, the headlines in the newspaper read, "13 Bridges Washed out on the Alaska Highway"! We tried to take the car back but they would not give us a refund. I phoned the road commission and was told to go ahead. "They'll have some way to get around them. The newspaper usually exaggerates." We had no other option, so we started out. Sure enough, there were passable detours, and we were able to get through. We hadn't gone far, however, when our tires started to blow out! They looked good but must have been rotten on the inside. In Fort St. John I was sold a "practically new" tire which turned out to be badly balanced, and the vibration was terrible. We drove all the way to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania with that car, then had to replace the transmission. It cost \$600, and I sold the car later for \$600.

Our stay in Bethlehem was very pleasant. Everyone was so kind and thoughtful. We had a comfortable suite in the Parish House, just about 500 feet from the river, with lovely lawns and big trees. The Prep school, which our sons Joel and Jim both attended, was only about 100 feet from where we lived. My training at Moravian Seminary had been interrupted in 1942 because of the war, so I now continued classes there. A beautiful cemetery was located nearby and we often walked through it. One night there was a bad windstorm, and two large trees blew down, leaving deep holes. Joel and Jim jumped down into the holes, and were pleased that we couldn't see them. They thought it was fun to hide from us. On another occasion, Pauline and I were walking home through the cemetery, and saw a man asleep on a bench, covered with a newspaper. He rose up as we were about to pass. He looked rather tough so I spoke gruffly to him and he let us pass. A week later a woman was attacked at the same spot by a man who had been

covered with newspapers. The description fitted, and we knew we had been protected from harm.

On May 15, 1955 I was ordained as a pastor in the Moravian church by Bishop Kenneth Hamilton and Bishop Edwin W. Kortz. It was a memorable occasion. Bishop Hamilton spoke on the theme "Feed My sheep..Feed My lambs" which I found very touching. I, of course, was thinking of my little lambs back in Alaska! They had asked me where I would like to have the service. The chapel on campus had the most beautiful stained glass windows I have ever seen. I couldn't think of a nicer place to be ordained. I was surprised to hear later that it was the first ordination to be held there. Hymns were sung to the majestic tones of a pipe organ. It truly was an uplifting experience!

By this time we had sold the Buick and needed a ride back to Edmonton. My brother Art and his wife, Velma, drove to Ontario to buy a new car. At that time cars were so much cheaper in Ontario than in western Canada that the difference paid their trip and then some. They offered to drive down to Pennsylvania and take our family back with them to Edmonton.

As they were heading for Bethlehem, driving down a busy highway south of New York city, in the middle of the night, Art began to wonder if he was on the right road. Velma was sleeping in the back seat of their brand-new car. Art saw an all-night filling station, stopped and went in to ask directions, leaving Velma asleep. Suddenly Velma awoke, realized that they were stopped and decided to use the filling station restroom. Art came out and drove

off. About 40 miles down the road, he put his hand back to see why the back door was rattling. For some reason he also felt to see if Velma was all right, and got the shock of his life! She was gone! How could that have happened? He realized it must have been at the filling station, but after passing so many, he was no longer sure where he had stopped. Meanwhile, when Velma discovered he had gone without her, she didn't know what to do. She phoned the police to have them try to stop him. Fortunately, Art turned around on his own and found her. They have taken lots of good-natured ribbing about this ever since, and after many years it even seems a bit funny to them also.

After a short visit with Mother and other family members in Edmonton, we left by train for Vancouver. From there we took a steamer to Seattle. It was all included in the one price of \$54 for our family of four! Next day we got a flight to Anchorage and from there back to Bethel and the Children's Home.

Returning Home

There was a nice welcome for us when we returned. The mission staff from Bethel was there, and a nice dinner was prepared and served in the dining room. After the fellowship meal, Rev. Schattschneider installed me as the new Superintendent of the Home, and also superintendent of the Upriver District. That meant making pastoral visits to the villages of Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, and Tuluksak...to be responsible for communion services, baptisms, weddings and other pastoral duties in each of the villages. Native pastors in each village conducted regular services and kept records,

and I was to work with them. I really enjoyed this aspect of my work in Alaska, although it meant much travelling, and over many winters by dog team.

We barely had time to get properly settled in our new home, the superintendent's house, before our third son, Dale, made his appearance. Pauline appreciated the privacy of our own home as she returned with a new baby. She was often tired, but we attributed it to the long journey we had recently taken to return to Alaska. Meanwhile, my new positions kept me very busy, so I was thankful for the help she received from the older girls. They, in turn, loved to share with Pauline and were excited about the new baby.

Our school had always been run according to State standards. When we arrived, there was only one classroom. With 35-37 students, it was a heavy load for one teacher, but Connie Sautebin handled it very well. In 1950, the State recommended that we open an additional classroom and hire another teacher. A large room on the third floor of the Boys' dorm became the lower grades' classroom. Miss Sautebin taught the older students and acted as principal. Later, grade nine was also offered. It had always been a heartache to have to send the children off to other schools at a time when they probably needed supervision the most. They seemed a little more mature by the end of ninth grade, and better able to go off on their own.

There were many extra activities for the children at the Home. All staff members took part in guiding these activities scheduled on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Such things as cooking, sewing, embroidering, drama, building with logs, woodworking and

electricity were taught. There was also a Boy Scouts troop. Children could choose their activity, but then they were to stick with it for the six weeks it took to complete a project. Cooking was a popular choice, especially for boys, because they got to eat what they made. After 6 weeks they could either change to a different activity or continue in the same one. We also had a choir led by one of the staff ladies, and on Wednesday nights there was young People's meeting. Usually this was divided into older and younger groups. There was much singing as well as the memorization of Bible verses.

Before we knew it, Thanksgiving was upon us. The children could invite their closest relatives. The Kwethluk teachers also came. They would bring movies for the children which were shown after dinner. And what a dinner it always was! Extra tables were set and several turkeys roasted to perfection. It was a very festive occasion.

Christmas Excitement

Hard on the heels of Thanksgiving came Christmas. The children had been practicing for weeks and could hardly wait. The first event was a candle service and love feast. People from the village churches were invited, and I once counted 26 dog teams tied up outside. You can't imagine the din when it was time to go home, as the dogs all barked excitedly. The older girls acted as waitresses and wore dark dresses, small white aprons and caps.

As a school project the children had written letters to Santa. These were left on their desks on the last day of school. The night before Christmas, after they were in bed, the staff had the enormous task of

trying to match the gifts to the letters, and packing all those stockings. It sometimes took until the wee hours of the morning. The older children knew what was going on, of course, when they saw us carrying down from the attic the big boxes of gifts that had been sent during the year by various churches. I wouldn't be surprised if there was some peeking through keyholes.



Christmas was always an exciting time. The season started with a candle light service and a Christmas pageant. On Christmas day the children found a stocking for each in the dining room. Later in the day Santa came with gifts for all.



We had a special breakfast of bacon and eggs on Christmas Day. Then the children got their stockings, filled with treats and little toys. Before they returned to the dining area for their gifts, there were chores that had to be done. When they returned, who should drive up, either by dogsled or snow machine, but Santa. By this time excitement was running high. Everyone gathered around the big Christmas tree in the dining room.

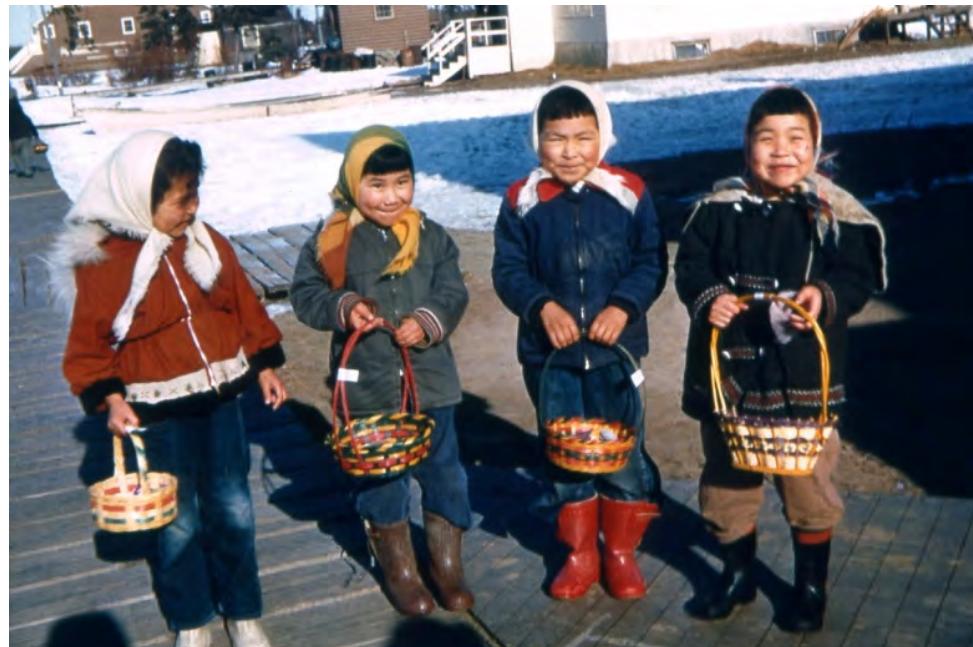
The staff helped Santa sort the gifts and deliver them to each child. Each was given a cardboard box to put all their gifts in. They really did get a lot of nice gifts. As if that wasn't enough, the boys then invited the girls to see the tree in their dorm, so we all donned boots and jackets and trooped down the long boardwalk. Under the boys' tree were little surprise gifts for each other. They spent the rest of the morning singing and playing with their gifts. For children who had recently joined us, it was all pretty overwhelming.

We usually arranged for a special movie in the afternoon. One memorable Christmas Day a group of soldiers from the National Guard in Bethel drove up in their jeeps, loaded with gifts for the children! There was either a sled, a toboggan or a pair of skis for each child. These were so much appreciated and got a lot of use thereafter.

On December 26th, we always had our Christmas program for which the students and teachers had prepared so long. The largest classroom was decorated with a large "Putz" or manger scene. The background was a sheet of plywood painted blue like the sky. We drilled many holes in it, so that the lights shining through from behind looked like stars. A platform had been built across the front

of the classroom on which the children performed. It was a very meaningful presentation, and we always had a full house with visitors from surrounding villages.

There was a Russian Orthodox church in the nearby village of Kwethluk. They celebrated their Christmas January 6-12. Some of our children were of Orthodox faith, so we usually took part in the carol singing in the Orthodox church on one of those evenings. Someone would speak, and then we went to sing at all the homes. They had gifts for all of us. They usually attended our celebrations, also.



Easter came with a celebration of spring and Easter baskets for all.

Also in January, the village of Kwethluk had dog races and a winter carnival. The dog races always passed the Home, an exciting event. We took the children to Kwethluk for the carnival, which was always a lot of fun. There were races for all ages. In one race, one which always brought a lot of laughter, sticks were scattered on the ice. Then husband and wife teams raced to see who could pick up

the most sticks in an allotted time. The men, who were to pick up the sticks, sat on a sled which was pushed by their wife. Another contest was a race to see who could make a hole in the ice the fastest with his ice pick. There were children's running races, a challenge on ice and snow, and women's dog team races. So you see, the long, dark winters are not as boring as many suspect.

Additional Responsibilities

After my ordination in 1955 I had the privilege and responsibility of ministering to four of the neighboring villages. Each village had a native pastor. I, however, was to oversee the work and officiate at weddings, funerals, baptisms and communion services. On Sunday afternoons I was usually off to one village or another. There were many adventures and hardships experienced as I carried out these pastoral duties, but it was a facet of the work which I keenly enjoyed.

I remember one incident as I returned from a service at the village of Akiachak by dog team. There was a small boy in the sled, all bundled up against the cold, and possibly asleep. I was running behind, sometimes riding on the sled runners. as I held the handles and guided the sled around bumps in the ice. Suddenly, to my horror, there appeared ahead a pool of open water, about 5-6 feet across! I instinctively gave the sled a mighty push as the dogs jumped across the water. Running around the pool, I was able to catch the sled on the other side and carry on. The boy on the sled never knew how close he came to death! I am sure this was true of all of us at times, as our Heavenly Father spared our lives in many ways.

Later, I was able to make the trips more quickly by snow machine but the dangers were still there. I was to perform a wedding in one of the villages one day. It was a warm, spring day, and the groom came to get me with his dog team. Against my better judgment, I stayed overnight. The next morning an elder of the church took me home with his skidoo. About half a mile out on the river we broke through the ice and sank into 4-5 feet of water. I was drenched to the waist, but thankful it happened close to the village. I made my way to the home of the little boy in the last story and his father. They kindly built up the fire so that I could get warm and dry my clothes. My Bible and other books were drenched as well, and they were not so easily dried. Neighbors helped the man get his snow machine out of the river. By late afternoon, we decided to try another route, and were able to get home safely.

We were very aware of the Lord's care on another occasion. This time I was driving a van, taking a group of ninth graders up to the village of Tuluksak to sing, as I conducted a confirmation service. Suddenly, as we were making our way down the river on the ice, the van stalled. I discovered that the sediment bowl had fallen off. The children stayed in the van while I walked back to look for it. About 1/4 of a mile back, I found it, but it was broken into 3 pieces! Returning to the van, I tried to fix it with tape, but it was impossible. It was a 10 mile hike back to the village of Akiak and it was starting to get dark, but I knew it had to be done. Warning the children to stay in the van and try to keep warm, I started to walk. I felt sick at heart, and fervently prayed for our survival and success. Cars had been driving up from Bethel to the Children's Home and even as far as Akiak, but none had gone beyond Akiak, and that's where we

were! But this day, a Bethel man had wanted to try out his new car, and when he saw our tracks passing Akiak he decided to follow! Surely God put it into his heart to do that! Meantime, I had reached the village of Akiak and was able to procure a sediment bowl. I had taken a shortcut so he did not see me as he drove by. He picked up the children who told him of our predicament, and came back to meet me. We tried the sediment bowl but it didn't fit our van. I knew we had one at the Home that would fit, so he drove us there to get it. The children were glad to stay home while he took me back to the van and waited until I got it going. What a friend in need, or was he an angel in disguise? The following Sunday I attempted to make the same trip and found wide-open water just a hundred feet or so beyond where our van had stalled! If we had gone further, we likely would have broken through and all perished! This is another incident that shows how the Lord undertakes and cares for His own. There were many similar experiences.

Furlough Two and Three

When our second furlough came due in 1960 we were able to purchase a new Rambler at cost through Mission Services. We ordered it and had it delivered to Anchorage. We had three excited boys as we started down the highway toward Edmonton where their grandparents, uncles and aunts and cousins all lived. We had a beautiful trip. The leaves were changing to their fall colors, and the air was crisp and fresh. Mother had moved to Edmonton and the house on the farm was empty, so we were able to make that our home. Jim and Joel attended school in Hay Lakes, as I had when a child. It was good for them to get acquainted with family and

friends that they heard so much about, but really couldn't remember from our previous furlough.



Between the first and second furlough a third son, Dale, was added to the family.

In December, we drove to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, so that I could take some college and seminary courses. We stayed in the Whitfield House, a large, beautiful, stone structure that had been started by George Whitfield. The Moravians bought and completed it, but kept the name Whitfield. The walls were stone and two feet thick. It was surrounded by lovely lawns, trees and flowers, and it seemed like a bit of paradise. The boys attended public school and continued their education there. I drove 12 miles to Bethlehem each day for classes. I took some education classes to better fit me for my role as superintendent of the school at the Children's Home. The people were warm and friendly and we cherished the friendships we made while there.

As our furlough drew to a close we bade our friends and family goodbye and made our way up the Alaska Highway again. We could hardly wait to get home, as it now seemed to us. We had been away from our extended family for nearly a year, and really wondered how everything was going, and if the children were alright. When we arrived at Anchorage we were able to sell the Rambler, now with several thousand miles on it, to a friend for \$1700. Soon our plane was winging its way over the frozen tundra as five eager pairs of eyes scanned the landscape for familiar landmarks! The last 27 miles were by boat, and there was an excited reunion when we finally arrived! Thanks to our dedicated staff, everything had gone well, but they were glad to hand my responsibilities over to me again, and I must say it was good to be back.

In 1963 the program was changed so that we would take 6 month furloughs every 3 years, instead of year-long furloughs every 5-6 years. Our furlough in fall of 1964 was a very memorable one because it became a time of heart-wrenching decision. Pauline had been finding it more and more difficult to cope with daily routines, and we realized that we must seek professional help. We had no idea what her problem was, but the doctors in Bethel and Anchorage had suggested we consult an orthopedic specialist when we got to Edmonton. Shortly after we got there, and moved into the Bell-Aire Apartments so that the boys could enroll in school, Pauline landed in the hospital. We were referred to a neurologist at the University Hospital who conducted tests and finally diagnosed her problem as multiple sclerosis. What a blow. To us it seemed like the end. Pauline wondered if she would live to see her boys grow up.

Friends and relatives urged us not to go back to Alaska, and we searched for other possibilities, but could find none that seemed right. It was a very difficult summer for all of us.

Pauline and I did a lot of talking and finally decided she would be better off in Alaska. The doctor informed us that a cooler climate is often better for people with MS. Bishop Kortz said that anytime she needed doctor's care we could fly out at the expense of the Mission Board. The superintendent's house at the Home was very comfortable and the older girls were always eager to help Pauline. We made the difficult decision to return to Alaska.

Joel was enrolled in High School, grade 10, and when it was time to return to Alaska he decided to stay in Alberta, on the farm with Aunt Donna and Uncle Alvin and finish his grade 10 in New Sarepta. Having started the school year in Alberta, it would have been difficult to change to the Alaska curriculum in the middle of the year. We all shed some tears as we said our goodbyes. We started out in February, planning to drive as far as Seattle, sell our car, and fly back to Anchorage. However, we were informed that the mountain passes were all closed. The highway north was good, we were told, so we headed up the Alaska Highway. Sure enough, we had good weather and roads all the way, and it was a beautiful drive. The trees were covered with sparkling snow and frost. The landscape was like a picture postcard. Jim (13) and Dale (9) found it a great adventure!

Soon we were again settled into routine at the Home, but we were missing our eldest son. He now seemed to be a world away. Mail service to Canada was hopeless and we had no phone. We were

thankful he was with family, and that he was involved with the New Sarepta Moravian congregation which was so supportive of our family. I know it was very hard, especially for Pauline. With the help of willing girls the physical work at the Home was not too demanding and we felt confident we had made the right decision in returning to Alaska.

The Flood

The spring of '64 will always be remembered as the year of the big flood! We were warned of that probability and had built an earthen dike to protect the lower part of the campus. A crew of four men assisted me in watching for danger. On a Saturday night in May, I was particularly apprehensive and patrolled the dike constantly. At 2 am I noticed some water seeping through, and immediately called to my helpers to strengthen that spot. Before they could get there, a large section of the dike was lifted by the force of the water and the river poured in. There were battery-operated bells in each of the three main buildings. These were rung to awaken everyone and warn them of the danger.

Our extra supplies and foods were stored in the basement of the girls' dorm. The laundry equipment was also there. In no time, it seemed, water was pouring into that basement, as we struggled to haul the food staples out. The help of the older boys proved critical. When the water was up to our waists we had to give up. What a horrible sight it was to see the river pouring through the girls' dorm basement and out the windows on the other side! I had cut off the electricity to prevent shorting as the flood began. The furnace and

laundry equipment were submerged as well as much of our food supply. Labels were washed off cans, so we had surprise meals for a long time after that. The children's dirty clothes, after their Saturday night baths, were taken to the laundry area, and were now floating around in the basement. They urgently needed those clothes, and fished through the window with long-handled rakes to retrieve them, so they could be washed at our house. The flood was an agonizing ordeal, and one which cost a great deal of money and back-breaking toil to bring some semblance of normalcy to life at the Home again.



Time was spent hooking and snagging clothes, food and other items that floated near the basement windows. It took several days for the flooded river to drop enough to allow pumping out the basement.

It seems as though children always find ways to have fun in any situation. The whole campus was flooded, to a depth of up to three feet. We never let them take a boat out on the river, but we did allow them to paddle around the campus during the flood, much to their delight. Other areas with shallower water was great for wading or playing with toy boats. However the older children were needed

to help us with countless tasks. Because oil is lighter than water all our oil drums began to float and were in danger of floating down the river. We tied logs together along the riverbank to form a corral and were able to prevent this from happening. Our long boardwalk, built over the tundra to connect the buildings, was also in danger of floating away. We pounded long stakes into the tundra to anchor the boardwalk, and fortunately it held. We had salvaged our sump pumps and they ran day and night to empty the water out of that 42' by 70' basement. They needed rebuilding after that! We removed the motors from the laundry equipment and sent them into Anchorage for reconditioning. It took a year to complete repairs. Makeshift methods had to be used to wash clothes for 50 people and it was no picnic. During flood time clothes got wet and muddy every day.

When the flood waters receded it was a full summer's job to clean up the basement. The board floor which had been built in sections and were not anchored down came up with the flood. Much of the floor was left unusable. A new floor had to be built after cleaning up the mess. Shelves had to be rebuilt to hold supplies. We washed the cans of food in Clorox solution to prevent contamination, dried them in the sun, then carried them down to the basement shelves again. It was well over a year before we got things back to normal. However, we were so thankful that no lives were lost or buildings destroyed. There is tremendous force from the water behind an ice jam, and that was what caused our flood. Once the ice below the Home broke up, the water drained away quickly. Spring breakup was a time of dread for us from then on.

The Phone

In 1968, four years after the big flood, I heard that the RCA Company was considering installing satellite telephones in Alaska. The plan was to install one phone in each village. I quickly got a letter off to them and asked if they would consider installing one at the Children's Home, explaining our situation, and emphasizing how valuable a phone would be in times of emergency. To my surprise, a prop jet landed on the river one day in early spring carrying five executives from RCA in New York. They were checking the Alaska situation, and since mine had been the only request, they thought we should get the first telephone! What exciting news that was!

After they had inspected the facilities and made their decision to install a phone, they attempted to take off again on the river ice. There was still lots of snow and I noticed that the left ski was picking up a heavy load of wet snow as the plane turned to take off. The front skis were very wide, and the weight of the snow pulled the plane to the side. One wing caught in some branches, causing the plane to crash into the riverbank. The motor immediately exploded, and the pieces flew hundreds of feet in every direction. Amazingly, no one was hurt, and the men made their way quite cheerfully back to the Home, tramping through the three foot deep wet snow in their dress shoes. There was nothing they could do except wait for another plane to come and pick them up. We contacted Charter Services in Bethel by shortwave radio, and they sent a small plane out to get them. They came at a time when travel was well-nigh impossible by every other means.

The next couple of weeks were filled with excitement for our children. An expensive camera had been lost in the crash and some of the boys found it in a snow bank the next day. A man was sent out from Anchorage to dismantle the plane for parts that were salvageable. There didn't seem to be too much damage done to the wings or fuselage, and after the snow went down, these were loaded onto two wagons, the length of which had to be extended. These were pulled down the river to Bethel by our little Ford tractor! It made quite a long train. The children watched the whole procedure with avid interest, of course, and talked about it for years. The trip went fine. It was not easy to figure out how to get off the river, however. There was water between us and the shore, and still lots of snow on the banks. We finally got ashore, and drove down Main Street , providing much entertainment for the townspeople. We drove out to the airport, a distance of about 5 miles, and a flying boxcar came from Anchorage to take the parts in for repair.

A few months later, our phone was installed. Our son Jim and Jimmy Oscar were given the honor of making the first calls, as the installer took their picture. When he left we were told that we were not hooked up for long distance yet. However, I could not resist the impulse to dial Alberta, and to our surprise the call went through. How wonderful to be able to contact our family at last. We talked for about an hour and never did get a bill for that call.

A Changing Need

In later years most of our children came from broken homes or alcoholic families, but we still received orphan children. Pastors in

outlying villages often sent their children to us in order to benefit from our school system. We received many referrals from the Board of Juvenile Delinquents later called the Division of Youth and Adult Authority. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Social Work Program and also the State Department of Public Welfare Social Services referred children to us more and more. Many of the children referred to us by social agencies had deep hurts and problems. Many had been molested; but by God's grace, many of them were changed and went on to lead productive lives.

These government agencies paid us a set amount per child each month which was very helpful. Mr. Gilbert, director of Jesse Lee Children's Home in Anchorage, spearheaded the effort to obtain state funding for children such as these. After this legislation was implemented, it was possible to provide much better care for Alaska's needy children, including the children in our care. We were very grateful for Mr. Gilbert's leadership and influence.

Furlough Four

As the time drew near for our next furlough, I was really feeling the need for a good refresher course in Christian counseling. I decided to take the six-week course offered by Dr. Clyde Narramore in Pasadena, California, beginning in June. We had a six month's leave, so we bought a VW camper and headed down the highway to Edmonton. After visiting everyone at Edmonton we started out for California. We would like to have taken the coastal route through the redwoods forest, but time did not allow. We did swing out to see San Francisco, however, and spent a very memorable night there. The boys had heard about a park in the mountains above San

Francisco with a good view of the city and the bay, and we decided to camp there. The three boys wanted to sleep out under the stars. They took their sleeping bags and hiked farther on to where the view was better. No sooner had we set up for the night than some other campers started playing loud rock music. We were very tired from travelling but it was impossible to sleep in such an atmosphere. If we moved, the boys would not know where to find us, so we stayed and spent a less then restful night.

The next night wasn't much better. We were heading for a campground that sounded very inviting. It was much farther off the highway than we anticipated, so it was dark before we got there. There were hardly any other campers there, and no artificial lighting. It was very spooky, and I didn't get much sleep. Next morning, we saw many raccoons watching us from the trees and even coming up for handouts. Except for my coonskin parka which I wore driving dog team, this was my first encounter with these creatures.

Arriving in Covina, California we were welcomed by our friends, the Hedgecock's. Rev. Hedgecock was the pastor of the Covina Moravian Church. We stayed with them for the first two weeks of the course at the Narramore Foundation. While Pauline and I attended classes every day, the boys, all teenagers, enjoyed sightseeing. The Hedgecock's took us to Knott's Berry Farm which was an enjoyable experience. I was a bit startled when a man in a jail cell called out as we approached, "Well, well! If it isn't my old buddy, Henkelman!" I found out later that Rev. Hedgecock had managed to get ahead of us and point me out to him.

During the last four weeks of the course, we stayed in the home of a Moravian family who were on vacation. It was in a very nice, secluded area on a mountainside, so it was cooler. The temperature down in the valley was more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and Pauline, especially, was finding this very tiring. It was a welcome relief to come home to this cool, spacious house at night. There was a pool nearby which the boys enjoyed.

I found the course to be just what I needed! Unfortunately we did not have a wheelchair, and Pauline found it very difficult to move from one class to the next. She did appreciate the teaching, however, and people appreciated her. Dr. Narramore asked her to give her testimony, and I understand he used it on several of his broadcasts.

We had hoped to go to Disneyland and visit other famous sites when the course was finished, but we got a phone call from Edmonton saying that my mother had been struck by a car while crossing the street, and was not expected to live. We drove day and night to get there in time. We passed through Las Vegas at night, which was quite a sight. As we passed through Salt Lake City we drove by the Mormon temple. We were happy to find that Mother was holding her own, and as I write this, 22 years later, she is still alive, but has suffered a great deal of pain since.

Joel stayed in Alberta in order to attend Prairie Bible Institute, but the rest of us headed back up the highway. We sold our VW van in Anchorage before flying to Bethel and the Children's Home. It had been an exhausting summer for Pauline, even though we had really

enjoyed it. It was good for her to get back to a cooler climate. She appreciated being in our own home so she could lie down whenever she felt the need. The girls were very helpful and understanding. However, we could tell her health was deteriorating, and wondered how long we could carry on.

Back at the Home, Challenges Continue

I was able to put to good use the training received at the Narramore Foundation. It seemed that there were more and more hurting families in Alaska. I spent many evening hours counseling with children who had been deeply scarred emotionally in their growing up years. During my trips to the villages many people sought me out for counseling. Services were often postponed for an hour or two in the afternoon because of counseling sessions. This was possible in village life because people always waited for a bell to ring before coming to church for the services.

Many of the problems were caused by alcohol consumption. Five children were brought to us, 2 girls and 3 boys, after their parents had a terrible fight. The father was a big man. During the fight he had stomped on his wife's face, breaking the bones and causing permanent mental damage. The children would never forget the horror of that sight. The father was put in jail, and the mother was hospitalized for a long time. She was permanently disfigured and disoriented. Later, she would come to visit the children but they remained in our care for many years.

Another boy came to us from Fairbanks. He had run away from home, stolen a car and led the police in a chase at 70-80 miles an

hour. He finally rolled the car but came out without serious injury. While at the Home he had his ups and downs, but gave his heart to the Lord. There were times when he was very hard to work with. After about a year he returned to Fairbanks. We have not heard from him since.

A distraught father came to us from Bethel to plead with us to take his six children. He and his wife were separated and she had been granted custody of the children. She moved to another village, and would leave the children alone for weeks at a time while she enjoyed herself in the city. When the government welfare checks were due she would return to claim her money and then be off again. We agreed to take the children, and he prepared to go to the village for them. I did not feel the ice was safe for travel, but he promised to be careful. As he was returning with the children, some of our boys, who had been hiking on Blueberry Hill, saw his dog team and ran out on the ice to meet them. The extra weight was too much for the ice and the sled broke through the ice and into the cold water. The boys helped to rescue the six children. They felt like heroes, although they had really been the cause of the accident.

The children were blue with cold. The staff worked with them, rubbing them to get their circulation going again. Two of the children were too young for us to care for with our limited staff and equipment but we admitted the other four. The next morning, the father left before sunup with his two youngest children, and made it safely to Bethel.

About a year later, the mother came to get the children. I said that her husband had placed them and we had to deal with him. She was missing her government checks more than her children, we realized. She returned some time later, having obtained a divorce and custody of the children. It seemed that mothers always won in cases like this, no matter how they lived. I could do nothing but grant her request. I offered her some coffee but she refused. She seemed strangely agitated, and kept her right hand in her pocket. Later, she came to the Lord after a service during which I had preached about the serpent in the wilderness, comparing it to Jesus on the cross. After I prayed with her to receive forgiveness for her sins, she told me that she had had a revolver in her pocket the day she came for the children. She had intended to shoot me if I had not co-operated.

And then there was the unsolved mystery of Gabriel Fox. He, his brother and sister were admitted in the middle of the week and I had not had opportunity to get acquainted with him yet. The children had been shifted around several times, again because of alcohol problems. They all felt very insecure. I had to go to Bethel for supplies. I used the "sneeze buggy" as some called our home-made snow machine. When I returned, I was informed that Gabriel had run away. This was not too unusual. Newcomers often got fed up with the system and would take off for awhile. I usually gave them time to "cool off" and then would usually find them crying behind a stump in the woods. I unloaded the supplies, had a bite to eat, and then took off after Gabriel. I expected to find him in the village of Kwethluk but no one there had seen him. His tracks did

not go beyond the village so I returned to the Home and phoned the social worker in Bethel. It was dark by now and useless to continue the search. The next day I was informed that Gabriel had spent the night with "a family" in Kwethluk, but could get no further information. Many mysterious stories began to be circulated. People were encouraged to leave their fish caches open in case Gabriel should be hungry. Some told of his long fingernails. We were told not to worry about him. He's alright. When we asked who he was staying with, the answer came, " Oh, we're not able to catch him. He just kind of floats across the ground."

Shortly after he disappeared, we hired a plane to look for him. I went with them. We spotted him down on the river ice, but he immediately dropped to the ground and covered himself with snow. The pilot dropped me off and I contacted the Social Worker, suggesting that the National Guard be requested to locate him. There were 118 men, 10-20 from each village, looking for him, but strangely they could not find him. They seemed to feel that he probably had returned to the Home and was hiding somewhere on the premises. They returned several times, over the next few weeks, to search every corner of the Home, disturbing our routines. We had to co-operate with them, and always served coffee, treating them courteously, but found it frustrating. A year or so later a judge had a presumptive death hearing for Gabriel and declared him deceased. The mystery never really was solved. We never did hear any more about his mother. His father had died of a heart attack while in training for the National Guard.

The Last Years

After we returned from our '68 furlough work was begun on a new powerhouse. At the time the smaller children were being taught in a classroom on the third floor of the Boys' Dorm, and we were urged by the board of education to bring this class down to ground level, to allow compliance with fire codes. This, of course, made sense and so our new powerhouse became a classroom for the younger children. Another building was constructed which was to be used as an upper-grade classroom, but it was never completed. A boardwalk was built to connect it with the rest of the campus. It was wired and insulated, but the inside walls were not finished, while we were there. A smaller room at one end was planned for offices and washrooms and it was planned to add another classroom beyond that, so that we would be able to return our new powerhouse to its original purpose.

However, it became necessary for us to make the difficult decision to leave the Home because of Pauline's failing health. It was not easy to find replacements who were willing to work in such an isolated area. It was necessary for workers to commit themselves to stay for a long time in order to get properly familiar with the hazards of river travel, winter and summer. Mechanical skills were necessary in order to keep all of the vital equipment in good working order. Then, too, they needed to have the spiritual dedication to minister to the children and provide training in Christian values and good citizenship.

Other staff members who had been there for an extended time also decided they were ready to leave at their next furlough. The difficulty of finding suitable staff plus the knowledge that there were more options for caring for needy children caused the church board to decide to close the Home. The need for the Children's Home decreased as more and more Eskimo homes became available to welcome needy children. The welfare department provided a stipend to those willing to open up their homes to children with needs. The homes had to pass inspections before the children were placed. We felt that the natural home environment with good parents would better equip them for living in the community.



In 1971 Clarence and Pauline celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We left the Children's Home in March, 1973 because of Pauline's health. Her MS had advanced to the stage where it was difficult to live in such an isolated area without adequate medical care. However, it was with aching hearts that we said goodbye to our home of 25 years. The people had become so dear to us, at the Home and in the surrounding villages. We were very touched by their expressions of love and concern as they bade us farewell at three separate gatherings. These memories will linger long. Knowing that the Home would be closed made it especially hard to leave. Several of the children wondered how they could help to keep it open. For some of them, it was the only real home they had ever known.

We were deeply concerned about the future of "our children". Where would they go, and how would they turn out? Some of the children we had cared for are unaccounted for. Some got into bad situations, but we pray that God in His mercy will bring them safely through and call them back to His fold. Some were adopted by fine, caring couples; many were taken into foster homes. Some went on to high school at Mt. Edgecombe or Sheldon Jackson in Sitka, or to Chemawa High School in Oregon. Quite a few became medical aides, to administer medication to sick people in the villages as directed by doctors on the phone or by radio. Many became nurse's aides; many became teacher's aides in the villages; some became certified teachers and registered nurses. Two became legislators. One girl became mayor in her village. One of the boys became the Bishop of the Alaska Moravian Missions and head of the Alaska Moravian Church. Several became pastors. One is the head of maintenance at the Bethel Hospital. Others are on the maintenance

staff at the Alaska Native Hospital in Anchorage. Several became pilots and one had his own flying service. Several became rural village postmistresses and many fishermen. Some served in the military with time in Vietnam or Germany. It is a joy when I hear of any who are still walking with the Lord, and those who have established fine Christian homes. As John, prompted by the Holy Spirit, wrote in 11 John, verse 4: "I know of no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

I'd like to mention four of our children who were adopted shortly before we left. Panine was adopted by an Episcopalian priest when about 8. They loved her and gave her a beautiful home. Mikey was adopted by the Bethel Hospital Sanitation Engineer and his wife. They were also a fine Christian couple. Mikey so proudly introduced everyone to his parents saying, " This is MY Mom, and MY Dad!" Joey was adopted by a Christian couple who were teachers in Kwethluk Village. When I visited their home it was touching to see the father kneeling by Joey's bed to pray with him. James was adopted by Dr. Bauman and his wife Bethel. James was hard of hearing and they hoped that they could help him.

Today the Children's Home is used as a retreat centre. There was some talk of establishing a Bible school there for training native pastors, but Bethel was chosen as a more suitable location. Buildings soon fall into disrepair when left vacant, and it is a never-ending task for the faithful few who are trying to keep it up. The last building to be started before we left has been finished and is now used for a kitchen and dining hall for retreats. I understand they call it Henkelman Hall, and I am very honored by that kind gesture.

When we left the Children's Home in the spring of 1973, we moved to Seattle where Jim and Dale were attending Seattle Pacific University. It is a fine Christian institution, with a beautiful, well-treed campus situated on Queen Anne Hill. Jim was able to rent a duplex on campus so that we could stay with him. Dale, being a freshman, was required to live in the dormitory, but we were able to spend much time with both of them during the year we lived there. Those were precious times. Joel was already working for the Federal Aviation Administration in Bethel.

Pauline was able to get the medical help she needed, and there was also a very active, caring support group for those with MS. This later influenced us to move to Seattle permanently. During that year Jim graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and it was a pleasure to be there for that occasion. When our furlough was nearly over, we received a call from the Alaska Moravian Church to serve in Dillingham. After much prayer and discussion, we decided to accept the call, and moved there in May of 1974.

Epilogue

Clarence and Pauline Henkelman served four years in Dillingham, providing pastoral services for the Dillingham Moravian Church, as well as serving as supervisory pastor for the villages of Togiak, Manakotak, Alegnagik and Clarks Point. Due to Pauline's deteriorating health, her physician recommended they move someplace where more consistent medical services were available, so the Henkelmans retired from mission service after thirty years in Alaska. In October 1978, they moved to Seattle, Washington, purchasing a home in North Seattle. However, their mission work did not end then, as they felt called to serve anyone they could from Alaska, meeting innumerable Moravians from Alaska who were traveling to or through Seattle. They loved being tour guides and finished off the attic of their home so they could accommodate guests for extended periods of time. Although they were unable to travel back to Alaska, their hearts never left there. Through letters, phone calls and any way they could, they continued to serve the people and communities they had grown to love over their thirty years of service.

Pauline's health slowly deteriorated and in August 1986, the Lord called her home. Throughout the many years that she dealt with her Multiple Sclerosis, she never complained, but consistently found cause to praise God for the opportunities her illness gave her to share her story with others and for her ability to actively continue to participate in her church and home life.

A little over a year after Pauline's death, Clarence's brother introduced him to Bernice Langager, a widow from Abbotsford, British Columbia, who had worked for several years at an orphanage in Mexico. Six months later Clarence and Bernice married and they had five wonderful years together before Clarence passed away in December 1992. They were able to spend a summer filling in at the Moravian Church in Dillingham and visiting the Bethel area communities where Clarence and Pauline had served. Since Clarence's passing, Bernice has continued to be a grandmother to Joel and Jim's children.

Although they had anticipated only spending a short stay in Alaska, Clarence and Pauline Henkelman grew to love the people, the communities and area they lived in for their thirty years of mission service. They always appreciated the love and affection shown them from the many individuals and families they grew to know and love.