

**Call number: 01-74-11**

**Titled in OH database as "COMMENCEMENT, 1973" – This is not the correct title! Looks to be an excerpt of 02-00-26. Commencement 1973 should be of James Michener speaking – which is 00-00-184**

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**Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master and circulation copies on CD.**

Muktuk Marston is telling a story.

He says a man went down to Marshall, which is called Fortuna Ledge on the map. A captain of the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) was in charge of the area and reported what he found. The captain of the ATG at Marshall was also named Marshal. The message was grounded at an air force communications center at Flat because it was a report from an Eskimo.

Ten days later, Pete got some lead into one of those balloons and found it. He cut the Japanese marking out, hooked his dogs up and went down the Yukon 33 miles and delivers it to the captain of the guard there. Then action took place and they believed the Eskimo. Men from the combat and intelligence department were there and they went out and got the balloon.

One Eskimo was on a trap line and he found a balloon and put it on his dogsled, he sleeps with it at night. After a few days he got back to his village. It turns out there was a live bomb in it.

Marston speaks of Eskimo life of the village. The missionaries could not quite control the Eskimos in their underground kashims. The missionaries said that Jesus would not like the way the Eskimos danced in the kashims. Muktuk Marston says the dances were the most delightful dances in the world. But they let the kashim, fundamental in the life of the Eskimo, die. Then the Eskimos had no place to meet.

Traditionally, once a boy was old enough to live without his mother, he moved into the kashim and lived there. It was in the kashim that the old men ran the government and taught the boys how to make a kayak, a very delicate instrument, to fit him. Muktuk Marston explains that, without the kashim, the Eskimos were forced to only meet above ground. You can't meet, organize and run a government at -40 degrees. So, the Eskimos were forced to meet at the school or the mission.

Muktuk Marston recalls when he was in Point Hope 30 years ago. An Eskimo explained to the BIA teacher that the Eskimos would like to dance on Saturday nights. The teacher said, "No, not this weekend." But of course, next weekend wasn't ok either.

Not having an Eskimo controlled meeting spot breaks down all government.

Muktuk Marston realized this fundamental situation, so he used surplus material that he bought from Nome to build armories and he gave the Eskimos the key so they can use them as kashim. The National Guard under General Nakraston(?) built 65 nice armories in 65 villages. In this way, though the military had the first call on these armories, the Eskimo people can use these armory-kashim as the center of Eskimo social life. And so government is returning to the Eskimo people and they are going to run their government.

Marston transferred over from the ATG. He spent four years in the National Guard and quit in 1946, after the war. Two years later, the governor came and got Marston to transfer the ATG people over to the National Guard.

Once, the General called Martson in. They were having difficulties regarding the scouts but were not sure what the cause of the problem was. The General asked if he had any suggestions regarding the difficulties. Marston recommended that Major John Shafer Jr. (?), an Eskimo from Kotzebue, and a Major qualified under the National Guard regulations, head-man and scout battalion #1 in Nome. This is 500 men under him. Marston felt that the Eskimos up in Nome were tired of having a white man "jerking their strings".

The General called Marston back later and said that he had taken his advice but that Major John Shafer Jr. wants you to go with him and see the Eskimos and find out what our problem is. Marston was happy to go back with John Shafer(?) and one of the Generals of the National Guard.

Marston digresses, speaks of other [moving?] pictures he has that might be of interest for records.

Marston gets back to his subject. He had hundreds of meetings. The Eskimos were happy to see him again. He had trouble with white traders, the shippers, and the politicians who had it all organized that the Eskimos were second class citizens, economic slaves. The white trader had control of the supplies and would give Eskimo money that was good only in his store. He talks about how the white traders would hike up the prices on "WWI tight-aced britches" in Selawik; buying them for 20¢ and selling them for \$20.

Paul Ballot(?) the lieutenant in charge there heard about this OPA (Officer Price Administration) and requested that the prices be lowered; they were too high. Muktuk said he could not come to the meeting because he was military, but the OPA man, Steve McCutcheon, agreed that the price was too high and required that it be lowered. The white trader that was jacking up the prices, however, was very clever and just went right around this: instead he just charged 10 muskrat skins per pair of pants. (Muskrat skins were worth \$2 each.)

The white trader didn't want anyone interfering with his income and, hence, gave Muktuk Marston trouble. The white trader did not want the Natives to be organized.

Muktuk tells an anecdote about a negative encounter with the Attorney General of the Territory of Alaska and pressure put on Muktuk intended to drive him out of the Arctic. Muktuk reiterates how strong his determination was to organize a Native army.

Muktuk says the Eskimos are great and wonderful people, "the greatest people any man ever met." He speaks about traveling around Alaska, visiting the Eskimos. Muktuk says his beat was 154<sup>th</sup> parallel west, the line from Barrow down to Kodiak Island.

The ATG was meant to be eyes and ears for the army. A scout's duty was to observe, report, harass, retard and fall back when overpowered. Muktuk says the first man killed was the teacher at Attu Island. A Japanese fleet arrived on Attu, the teacher made for the radio shack. Muktuk tells specific examples of scouts' achievements including rescuing navymen whose ships were shot down by the Russians and scouts who were able to locate a sergeant from a plane which was shot down after other military men

had failed to locate him. The Army today says that the scouts are the best soldiers they have ever had for arctic duty. Muktuk finishes his story about the ATG.

Muktuk says he was a member of the Alaska Constitutional Convention, which met in Fairbanks for 75 days. Muktuk says, “[Fairbanks] is a cold, rugged country. I respect you, Fairbanksans. You can take it.”

Muktuk says that we are a sovereign people up here, but are not being treated as a sovereign people. People from the outside, Muktuk calls them “birdwatchers,” are telling us what to do. They want us to put everything under a reservation for wilderness’ sake. If it was all up to them, they would stop the pipeline. The ecologists want to protect the wolves; to hell with the caribou and the moose. One wolf can kill as many as 70 caribou in a year. He compares protecting wolves in Alaska to protecting rattlesnakes in the lower 48. Muktuk says their idea is great, but it is wrong.

Muktuk is a trustee of the Rampart Dam. The power was needed, but the project was stopped because of people writing their congressman and senator until the politician just withdraws and doesn’t make a decision. This is not the democratic way; they could kill a man by writing to the politicians.

Muktuk speaks of a hearing in Copper Center regarding giving 10,000 acres to the “birdwatchers”. Muktuk says he would be for this if an Alaskan organization were to run it, instead of having Washington, D.D. control it. Muktuk says that we have lost Guening and Bartlett, who had some pull, and instead we have some freshman senators representing us.

Muktuk says that Alaska has more coal than any part of US. When coal was the king of all power, Congress decided to preserve the coal of Alaska and keep it for posterity. Now we don’t need it. This is what is happening with the “birdwatchers” trying to shut down the pipeline.

Muktuk says that if [the U.S.] runs out of oil, it will not be a first-class power anymore. The discovery on the North Slope will put us back up as a first-class power, but a “birdwatcher” got Hickel under control and quieted him down. Muktuk says that Uncle Sam ought to give the Eskimos a lot of money because of the pipeline. Muktuk is all for pure water, and Alaska can clean up a little, but Alaska needs this pipeline.

Muktuk talks about his book, “Men of the Tundra”. The book was meant to give the Eskimo image a place in the sun. There are 3,700 heroes he recorded in the back of the book; men who took up arms to defend their land.

Here Muktuk says he could go on talking for days and suggests they stop recording. The woman asks him to first relate how he acquired his nickname.

He came into Point Hope. He had made 65 miles by dog team that day. That is about all he can do in a day. He tells about trying to make 85 miles one time, from Teller to Nome and stopping at Sinrock(?), a place about 20 miles from Nome for tea. He warmed up, dozed off and got up to go outside to relieve himself. The Eskimo said, “Major, we’re short of tanning fluid here. Yours is just as good as ours” and handed him a pail. And so, before the women and the kids, Muktuk “contributed.” They stayed there all night and did not make the rest of their journey to Nome.

Muktuk comes back to the story. He had made 65 miles to point hope and parked his dogs at his friend’s igloo. He crawled in just as they were having dinner. The Eskimo was taking out slabs of muktuk. They

were eating. It was hot in the igloo and they stripped to the waist. They ate and talked and laughed and visited. Finally, Muktuk stood up to stretch. The Eskimo asked if he was though eating. Muktuk said he wasn't. The Eskimo said, "I give up. You are the champion." Muktuk was in a contest, won the contest and didn't even know he was competing. That is how he got the nickname.

Related material:

A link to "The Alaskan Eskimos in World War II" by Senator Ernest Gruening, excepted from "Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War" by Muktuk Marston:

[http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ak\\_military/men\\_of\\_tundra/men\\_of\\_tundra.htm](http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ak_military/men_of_tundra/men_of_tundra.htm)