

TOP COVER FOR AMERICA ... AAC Guards the Air Approaches

THE HARDY, DAUNTLESS MEN who provide the "Top Cover for America"—the airmen of the Alaskan Air Command—like to think of their outfit as the "quarterback" on America's defense team. It's a very apt allusion, too. For, if the United States is ever attacked by an enemy flying over the polar route, this USAF command will call the signals that will swing the Nation's military might into action, and it will be the first to carry the ball!

Alaskan Air Command is of towering importance to the defense of our country. In order to understand why, let's examine Alaska from the point of view of our military strategists: Its importance lies almost entirely in its location—with its long Aleutian appendage, it flanks the great circle shipping routes across the Pacific Planes, ships, and submarines based at Kodiak and elsewhere in the Aleutians, working with forces based on Hawaii and the West Coast, could protect the vital supply lines to our positions in Japan and the western Pacific.

But vital as Alaska is to maritime strategy, it is even more vital to air strategy. It is the springboard for the USAF's "Polar Concept." The main idea behind this concept is simply that the shortest routes to many points in Europe and Asia lie across the polar icecap. The Alaskan Air Command provides a Gibraltar-like rampart against any potential enemy air strike launched from Eastern Siberia, which lies only 55 miles across the Bering Strait. It is the job of the Command to see that such an air attack would be unsuccessful.

Crew of speedy F-89D jet fighter check flight plan just prior to a routine training mission.



TOP COVER FOR AMERICA (Continued)

To achieve the potent air defense inherent in the aerial barrier it has erected in the Alaskan skies, AAC had to overcome some truly formidable obstacles; for the "Land of the Midnight Sun" is a land in which military operations of almost any kind are extremely difficult and extremely expensive.

Alaska is a land of great distances, of sparse populations, of towering peaks, of barren tundras, of untrodden wilderness, of relentiess winter. Temperatures plunge to 50 and 60 degrees below zero, and mere survival is often an everyday concern. Mounds of muskeg (a spongy moss with water lying but a few inches below the surface), the treacherous mush ice over swirling brooks, the extreme cold, and the deep, powdery snow (in which skis frequently sink a foot or more) — all contribute to the fact that a milean-hour rate is a big achievement for any military ground unit. As an Army pamphlet puts it, "the country is meant to fly over, not to walk or ride over."

For these cogent reasons, the United States Air Force is charged with the major burden of the military defense of Alaska and of the airways approaching this country from the northwest. It's a big assignment, but the Alaskan Air Command is designed and equipped to do just that.

Have you got the idea that the rugged North Country isn't exactly ideal for air operations? You're right, it isn't! But though the difficulties are great, they don't faze

the men of AAC. Air Force planners have licked the problem of providing adequate clothing. Many layers of loosefitting garments are the answer. They keep airmen warm no matter how bitter the cold. The mechanical and engineering problems posed by the frigid Alaskan blasts have been largely overcome, too. The many tales of American ingenuity are more than idle legends—the men of the Alaskan Air Command revel in hurling back the challenges of the silent Northland.

The Territory of Alaska is enormous — 586,000 square miles — and it isn't feasible to defend it everywhere. It is an axiom of our military planners that "he who controls the heartland controls Alaska." And they believe the "heartland" to be the Anchorage-Fairbanks area. It is in that section that our three principal airbases are located.

The two principal components of the Alaskan Air Command, commanded by Maj. Gen. George R. Acheson, are the 10th and 11th Air Divisions. The 10th is based at Elmendorf Air Force Base near Anchorage, and the 11th has squadrons split between Ladd AFB and Eielson AFB, both near Fairbanks.

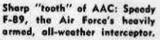
These Divisions are composed of all members of the great Air Force team—pilots, aircraft observers, radio operators, tower dispatchers, ground crews, weapons technicians, jet mechanics, electronics experts, security guards—and the supply, medical, food service, and administrative



This modern building at Elmendorf AFB houses headquarters of the Alaskon Air Command.



Maj. Gen. George R. Acheson, called the "airman's general," CG, the Alaskon Air Commond.





men without whom AAC's mission could not be accomplished. There are no benchwarmers in the Alaskan Air Command, everyone is on the first team!

There is still another member of the AAC defense team, the Eskimo, who lives not much differently today than he did when Paul Revere was watching for the famous belfry signal in 1775. But the Eskimo, who is a valued member of the Ground Observer Corps, does not use a horse to spread the alarm. He has something more effective—a modern radio transmitter. When he spots a plane, he hastens to a G. O. C. post, where the information is relayed by radio to an AAC early-warning site.

The Alaskan Air Command is equipped with the best planes and material that the industrial genius of the United States can produce; but that's only half the story—the Command's real "ace in the hole" is its steel core of veteran officers and noncommissioned officers, many of whom have outstanding World War II and Korean combat records. They're aware of the grim fact that this Nation's very survival might depend on how well they do their job. What's more, these invaluable men have the ability to communicate their hard-won knowledge of aerial operations to the younger members of the Command.

However, as hard as they work and train, it must not be imagined that the men of the Command don't have plenty of time for fun and relaxation. They very definitely do. During the long winter nights when the resplendent Northern Lights are writing their flickering, ghostly patterns in the Alaskan skies, airmen are snug in their warm barracks and enjoying themselves with the sturdy selfreliance that is the hallmark of American servicemen wherever they are stationed.

Years ago, Robert W. Service, the poet laureate of the Northland, wrote a poem about the sad case of a gentleman from Tennessee who froze to death while prospecting for gold in the Klondike. It was called "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and it started off like this:

There are strange things done in the midnight sun

By the men who moil for gold;

The Arctic trails have their secret tales That would make your blood run cold:

The Northern Lights have seen queer sights, But the queerest they ever did see

Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge

I cremated Sam McGee.

Well, that must have been a queer sight all right! But any invading air fleet will see a stranger, infinitely more terrifying one: They'll be greeted with an inferno of devastating firepower that will make Sam's cremation look like very small potatoes, indeed.

For, make no mistakes about it, the men of the Alaskan Air Command mean business!



DEATH DEALING DEFENDERS

"SCRAMBLE!" Ceaseless, split-second training exercises, part of the daily routine of the Alaskan Air Command, will leave little to the imagination concerning the whereabouts of U. S. Air Force interceptors in the event of an enemy air attack along polar routes. Fighter-interceptors will be "up an' at 'em" in record time.

Twenty-four hours a day, every day, jet interceptors move over the vast, barren reaches of Alaska like giant mechanical hawks—ready to strike if threatened. When not in the air, interceptors stand combat-ready on the flight line. As one blond-thatched pilot put it: "Just as sure as winter brings snow to Alaska, there won't be a combat plane caught on the ground if we're attacked."

Achieving and maintaining combut-readiness in Alaska is not an easy task. The mercury often tumbles to 60 degrees below zero, as winter enshrouds Ladd and Eielson Air Force Bases, near Fairbanks. Aircraft motors, lubricants, and weapons have to be tested and checked constantly. Other obstacles that make life difficult for interceptor crews are the snow, ice, blizzards, high winds, and trackless tundras—all of which defy dead-reckoning flying and create innumerable operational problems.

Great strides have been made since 1942, when the Command had only a limited number of planes available. Today, in addition to the usual array of airpower, there are six interceptor squadrons assigned to the AAC. They are the 18th, 64th, 65th, 66th, 433d, and 449th. These squadrons are based at Elmendorf, Ladd, and Eielson Air Force Bases.

The F-89 Scorpion all-weather interceptors and F-86



Sabrejets are the "workhorses" of the squadrons. The latter, which carries a one-man crew, is a battle-tested veteran of the Korean conflict. All of the interceptors bristle with armament. The rocket-armed F-89D carries 104 air-to-air rockets, making it one of the Nation's most heavily armed planes. The cannon-armed F-89C scoots along at speeds of 600 miles an hour, and is capable of ranging far and wide at altitudes in excess of 45,000 feet.

These planes carry an intricate maze of electronic equipment, which enables them to seek out and destroy enemy aircraft by day or night—in all kinds of weather. Two-man crews—a pilot and a radar observer—guide these deadly demons on their missions. Constant training keeps everyone fit and ready for action. Proceeding on the premise that "every second counts," the performances of these crews in getting aloft couldn't be improved by even the most exacting time-and-motion expert.

One of the most thrilling and awe-inspiring sights at an Alaskan base is to see all operational gears mesh, as they are triggered into action by an "alert." All it takes to start things moving is an unidentified "blip" on a radarscope.

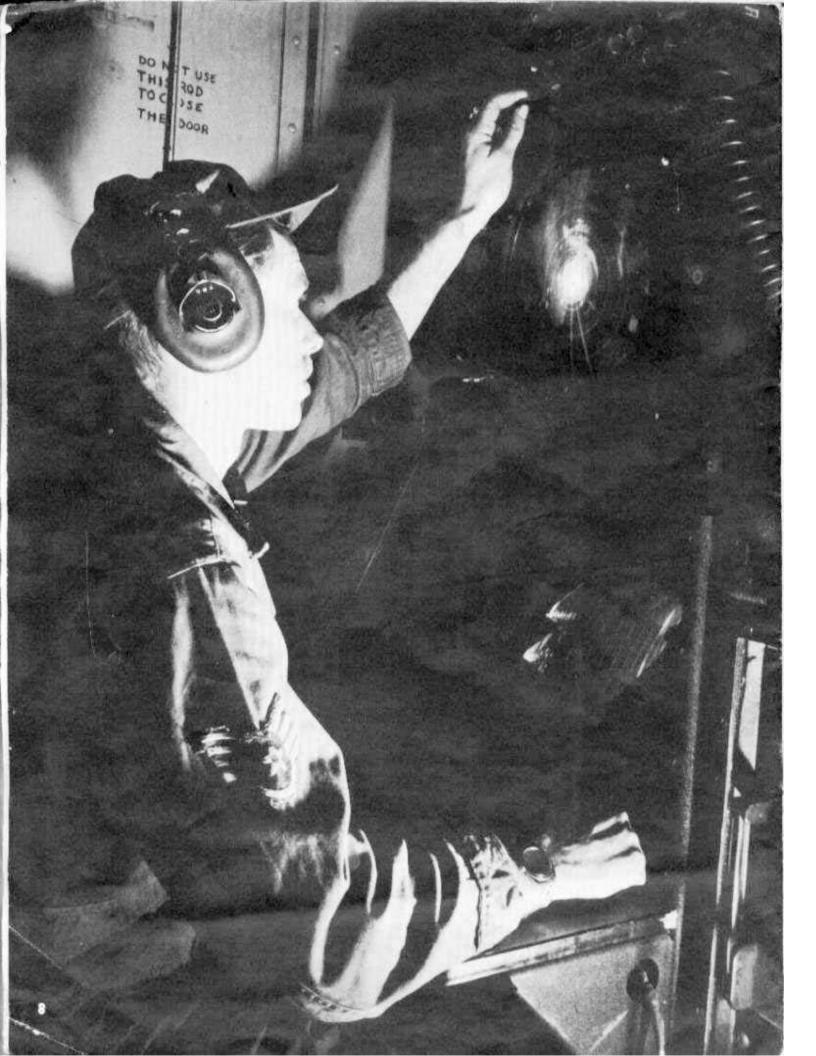
The "alarm" sounds and, before the first reverberating echo is heard, pilots and aircraft observers come tumbling out of the "ready shack," fastening their gear as they dash for the flight line. In a matter of seconds, the fueled and fully armed planes are in the air and in pursuit of their target.

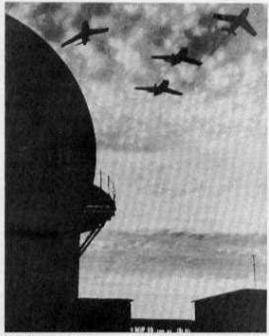
The interceptors of the Alaskan Air Command are ready — for anything . . . anytime . . . anywhere! END

Cold-tinged controls and instruments are preheated by equipment protruding from an F-86. (Inset) A formation of Sabrejets, from Eielson AFB, wings north an a routine training mission.

A/1C Howard Pauley adjusts the transmitter of an F-86 Sabre. The mechanism is part of the complex radar-ranging gunsight.







Alaskan Air Command jet interceptors and earlywarning radar sites both play vital defense rales,



Aircraft Control & Warning technicians at remote radar stations keep constant watch over Arctic aerial avenues to the U. S. A.

NORTHLAND VIGIL

OSING SOUTHWARD, a bomber formation wings its sinister way out of silent Arctic skies. Bomb bays cradle lethal eggs of destruction—missiles capable of leveling entire ciries into a blazing holocaust, taking untold numbers of lives, and leaving nothing but smoldering craters in their wake.

This is the enemy. His target — "Your town, U. S. A."
Yer, even as the flying menace proceeds along its course above the snowy blanket that carpets the trackless miles of the Arctic regions, far below, in a snug, isolated sentry post, alert eyes follow the series of telltale
blips on a radar screen that traces its every move. Already,
skilled fingers have flashed the warning of the enemy's
approach. And, within a matter of short minutes, sleeklined, supersonic interceptors will sweep up to the attack.

Rest easy. You're right. This is only make believe only an account of what could happen if aggressor forces were to launch such a sneak attack against our country.

However, in part, it is a reality; for 24 hours a day, every day, alert eyes are constantly on watch and ready to act against a northern aerial attack on the United States. They belong to the men of the U. S. Air Force Aircraft Control and Warning squadrons—"watchdogs" of the Alaskan Air Command at strategic radar sites along the perimeter of our northern chain of defense. It is their specific job to spot any intruders on the Arctic aerial avenues to North America.

What of these unsung airmen, then? How do they live in the frozen wastes of the northerly regions — keeping their lonely vigil?

This point in itself is important, for it is a popular misconception that these early-warning stations all lie buried beneath the snow, deep within the mythical realm of the Arctic Circle. Writers of modern-day adventures and fiction would have the reader believe that all of these ice-crusted "radomes" are remotely locked in some bleak, subzero hollow, eternally haunted by the eerie flashes of the Aurora Borealis.

Actually, the majority of them are no more isolated or "refrigerated" than the early-warning stations strung out through northern Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana. Like miniature counterparts of the larger Alaskan airbases, or Air Force bases anywhere in the world, they are complete military installations, though uniquely adapted to their Arctic locale.

Although the principal task of these squadrons is to scan the scopes and maintain the huge electronic eye that is the focal point in their intricate systems, and the larger part of their complement is the skilled specialists and technicians who man them, there are also the same variety of jobs and the trained airmen to perform them as are found on any base.

Since the Alaskan Air Command has done everything possible to make the airman's stay at such sites as pleasant as possible, these men enjoy the same clean, comfortable living facilities found at all bases.

The morale or esprit de corps of the men at these stations is just as high as that found among airmen everywhere. Life at these outposts is characterized by a friendly air of familiarity and brotherhood. By virtue of their isolation and devotion to a common task, they are closely knit by the bonds of common loyalty—loyalty to each other, to their unit and its mission, and to the great Nation they are protecting.

How important is the job they are doing? It is difficult to measure this importance without actually facing the grim possibility of an aerial atomic attack by an enemy. We do know that the early warning of such an attack will be sounded by the men of the Aircraft Control and Warning squadrons. This warning could give our Nation's fighting forces the few hours' edge needed to spell the difference between victory and defeat.

cheechako





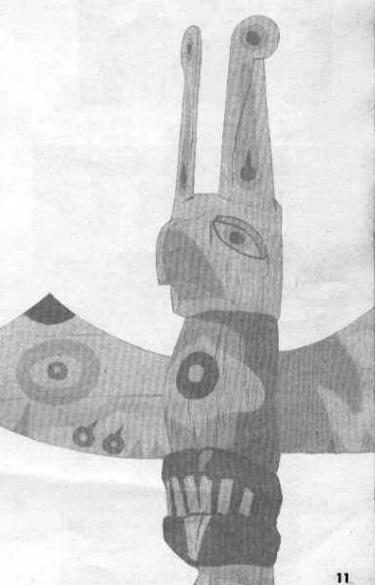
Modern Living Above the 50th Parallel

to sourdough

THE AIRMEN were obviously strangers in Fair-banks. This was apparent as they walked down the main street of this modern Alaskan city. Perhaps an old Jack London novel had distorted their conception of what an Alaskan city should look like because they took in the sights with open-mouthed amazement. Only a few days before, these airmen had landed at nearby Ladd Air Force Base to begin a 2-year Alaskan tour. Now, however, they were getting acquainted in a pleasantly surprising way. They passed a drugstore, clothing store, the Empress Theatre, paused to stare unbelievingly at a 10-story building, then barely missed getting hit by a taxi as they crossed the street.

"More cheechakos!" the cabbie mused good-naturedly. His passenger chuckled, then remarked that perhaps the airmen expected to see bearded prospectors and trappers mushing down the street. Then they both laughed the way "sourdoughs" or oldtimers might when sharing a joke about "cheechakos" or newcomers. The airmen continued on down the street chattering about Fairbanks' resemblance to the good old U. S. A.

The airman's first introduction to Air Force life in Alaska is a happy paradox. It happens frequently throughout the year, as hundreds of airmen arrive from the United States to take up assignments at one of the three large Alaskan Air Command bases. Elmendorf Air Force Base, located near Anchorage, and Ladd and Eielson Air Force Bases, near Fairbanks, in addition to being conveniently located near modern cities, are excellent examples of how











sourdough (Continued)

the U. S. Air Force has successfully transplanted up-todate living facilities above the 50th parallel. And, because Uncle Sam has a special interest in the men he sends north for the protection of important real estate, he sees to it that they are provided with the best of everything.

For example, most bachelor airmen live in large, comfortable concrete barracks, two to a room. The homelike atmosphere of these rooms has been enhanced considerably through the industriousness of airmen who have added window curtains, bookshelves, desk lamps, and other personal touches.

Until men of the U. S. Air Force arrived in Alaska, the Kodiak bear reputedly had the biggest appetite in the far north. While food service personnel at Alaskan Air Command do not contest this possibility, they do take extraordinary pride in satisfying the airman's "bearish" appetite. And they do a splendid job because the airmen, like Oliver Twist, keep coming back for more! Dining hall personnel serve well-prepared, attractive meals, often augmenting menu items sent from the United States with fresh vegetables, fruit, and dairy products from Alaska's farm belt, the Matanuska Valley. The multiple-menu plan used by the Alaskan Air Command food service section usually provides for three choices of meat, four or five selections of vegetables, and a variety of salads and desserts at each meal. And, because of the subzero temperatures of the Alaskan winter, calorie consumption is increased from the standard 3,600 maintained at Air Force installations in the U.S. to 4,400 - daily.

The energy and vitality that a good meal builds in an airman are well used however, not only for the many vital tasks that go toward the fulfillment of the important

Variety, the spice of life, also aptly describes off-duty activities available to the Alaskan Air Command airman. Whether he likes to golf, entertain or be entertained, dance, or see the sights, it's all part of his interesting recreational time in Alaska.

Alaskan Air Command mission, but in the wide variety of off-duty recreational activities available to airmen. Service clubs, which are open to all airmen, feature a large number of variety shows and other forms of entertainment in which airmen often participate. Girls from nearby communities attend frequent dances scheduled at these clubs. Sightseeing tours of Alaska, television rooms, pool tables, ping-pong equipment, coffee and doughnut hours, and many other recreational means are provided without charge to airmen.

The old Alaskan trading post is a thing of the past. Base exchanges in the Alaskan Air Command resemble well-stocked department stores. They carry cigarettes, toilet articles, a complete line of military and civilian clothing, publications, snacks, sporting goods, hobby equipment, native-made souvenirs, and many other items. Exchange concessions offer photo developing and printing service, travel agencies, a photo studio, dry-cleaning and laundry service, barbershops, watch repair, and many other facilities.

Motion picture theatres offer Hollywood's latest films, including CinemaScope productions. Hobbyshops make it possible for airmen to learn new crafts or continue former hobbies while serving in Alaska. Well-stocked libraries offer a wide selection of books to suit every reading

taste. For the athletically inclined, there are superbly equipped gymnasiums, bowling alleys, swimming pools, skating rinks, and fishing and hunting gear.

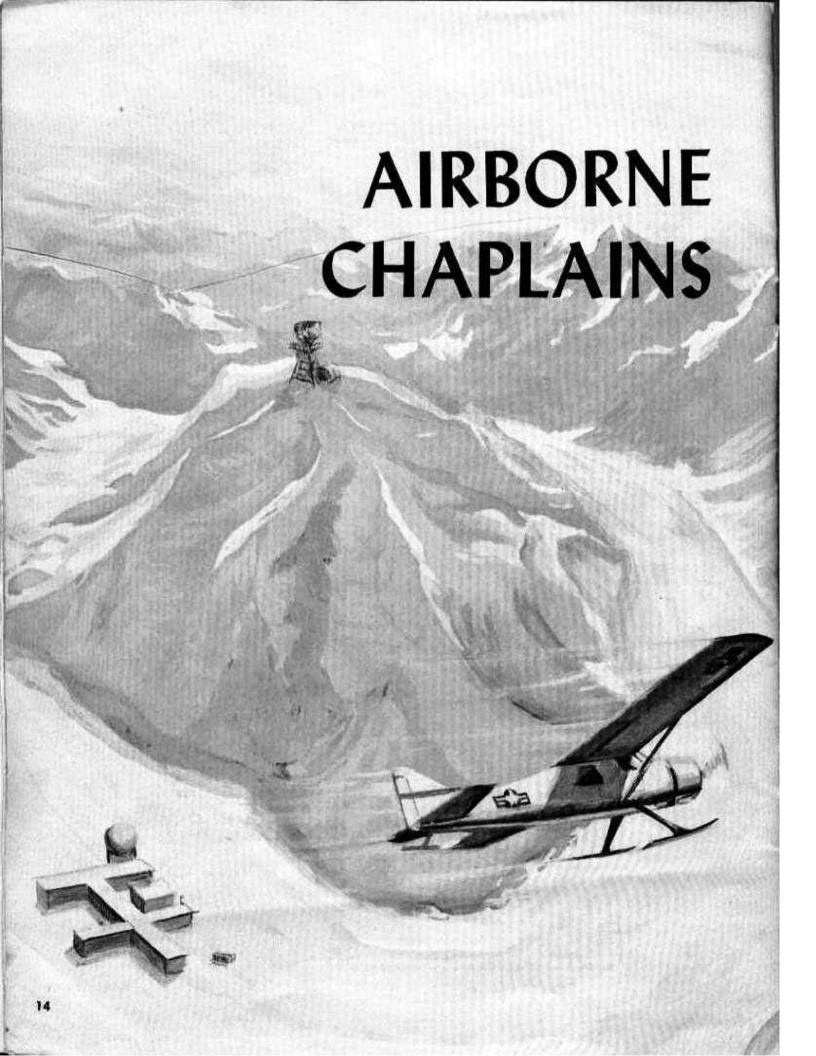
Although much mineral wealth has been taken from the prospector's pan in Alaska, the alchemy of furthering one's education is always a golden opportunity available to airmen serving in Alaska. The education program at the larger bases provides courses at every level of scholastic attainment, from grade school through college. Active schedules of group-study classes in vocational-technical and high school subjects are maintained. For those interested in a college education, on-base branches of the University of Alaska offer excellent opportunities to launch or continue college educations. Students completing courses are granted full residence credit which is accepted toward the completion of degree requirements. In addition, there are correspondence courses in a large variety of subjects, offered through the United States Armed Forces Institute.

So, Air Force life in Alaska is not much different from that in any other part of the world. Although the mission of the Alaskan Air Command is accomplished against the background of Alaska's rugged wilderness, the airman works and lives on Air Force installations that are as modern as any in the United States.

END



Roeftop view of Main Street in Foirbanks, Alaska, a modern city located near Ledd Air Force Base.



Protestant Chaplain B. C. Trent and Jewish Chaplain Jacob Rubinstein unload portable equipment which they will utilize in religious services.

Not all radar installations have churches. Here a flying chaplain adds a touch of humor during services which are conducted at a site theatre.



HIGH ABOVE THE CHILLY COASTS of the Bering Sea, a light Air Force plane (L-20) heads toward an isolated radar site. Its cargo is more precious than any brought to Fairbanks by the huge, redtailed C-124 Globemasters; for when this plane lands, one of the most needed and respected men in the Air Force will jump out into the snow. The pilot will hand him his equipment (a collapsible altar, portable organ, and a briefcase filled with hymnals), close the cockpit door, and prepare to take off.

• If it is his first trip, the newly arrived Air Force chaplain will look around in amazement. At most, he will see miles of snow, three or four quonser huts that serve for messhall and barracks, an administration building, a radar installation—and many more miles of snow. For the next few nights, he will sleep on a bunk in one of these huts. For the next 12 months, his job will be to fly to other radar sites similar to this one.

When a chaplain is assigned to duty in Alaska, he becomes a kind of missionary. Actually, his duties are the same as if he were in the United States; to provide the official services and sacraments of the faith he represents. But in Alaska, a chaplain finds, more often than not, that the airmen don't come to him for these things. They

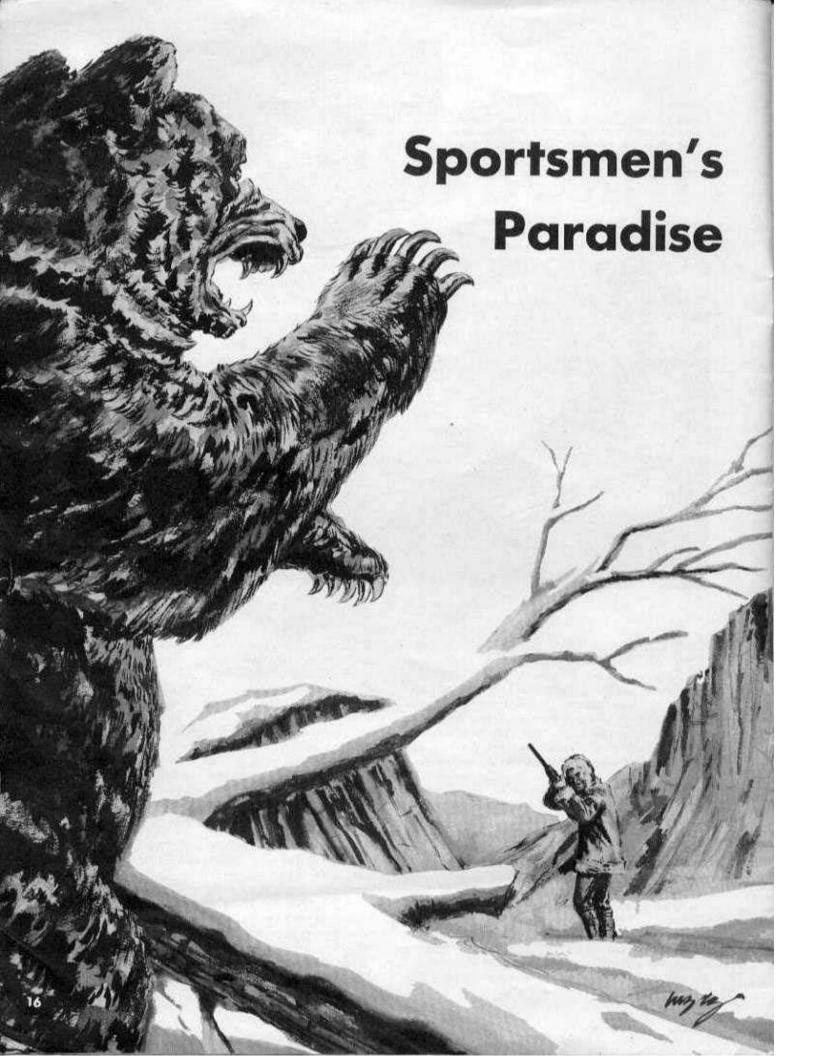
can't. Distances, weather, and the scarcity of churches prevent them. So, since the men are often unable to go to church, chaplain and church go to them. A continual flight schedule is in operation to bring Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish chaplains regularly to all isolated bases of the Alaskan Air Command.

Invariably, the reception a chaplain finds at these sites is inspiring. The men are more than anxious to see him. It does not matter if there is no formal church for services. Chaplains set up altars and men sing hymns, say prayers, or receive Holy Communion as fervently in a base theatre or warehouse as they would anywhere.

During their visits, chaplains give counsel to anyone who asks for it. Confessions are heard, problems discussed. Often a chaplain finds that the simplest bit of news from the States, such as the retirement of a ballplayer, can mean a lot to an airman who may be a hundred miles from Siberia and thousands of miles from home.

After a few days at one radar site, it is time for the chaplain to carry on the tradition of the pioneer circuit rider. Another plane is ready to carry him to a site farther north, where once again he will bring the warmth of religious fellowship and personal devotion that is stronger than all the snow and ice in Alaska.

END



THE DREAM OF THE OUTDOORSMAN BECOMES A REALITY IN THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

PAR TO THE NORTH lies a big, rugged country of vast forests, towering mountains, and glistening lakes. The natives called it "Al-ay-ek-sa," or "the Great Land." Skeptics called it "Seward's Folly," a barren, ice-covered wasteland uninhabitable by man, when it was purchased from Russia in 1867. This cold opinion of the Territory thawed and resolved into a myth, as time and experience proved many of the reports fictional. Today, airmen standing guard on America's last frontier find it an outdoorsman's world.

It is a land of contrasts on the roof of the world. The mercury reaches the high 90's near the Arctic regions during the summer and on occasion plunges to 60 degrees below zero in winter. And airmen in Alaska find off-duty activities as diversified as the temperature.

It is first and foremost a land for the hunter. Like the Great Plains of the United States before the migration to the west, Alaska abounds with wild game. To protect these animals from the wanton slaughter that befell the large berds of American bison during the last century, hunting regulations are rigidly enforced. Hunters are forbidden to kill wild food game without making every effort to have the animal utilized for food, and a wounded animal must be tracked and killed.

Airmen planning an extensive hunting expedition often procure the services of an experienced guide. They find this woodsman's extensive knowledge of the wilderness and wildlife makes him an invaluable addition to their party. Much of the camping equipment needed for such an outing frequently may be checked out from the airmen's Base Special Services organization.

The most popular and numerous game in Alaska are the caribou, several species of which roam the vast tundra regions in great herds. Nature and predatory animals such as wolf packs have made the buck a wary creature, quick to take to his heels when his keen ears and sense of smell detect danger in the air. His fine head with antlers that sometime reach 60 inches in breadth makes him one of the most coveted trophies in North America. Weighing upwards of 500 pounds, a full-grown specimen provides a native settlement with meat for a week and the airman with a hunting prize he will treasure.

Moose, largest of Alaskan hoofed game, roam the Kenai Peninsula of the south. Less numerous than the caribou, they move about singly or in small groups. This 1,400-pound animal's magnificent spread of horns sometimes reaches 70 inches with upwards of 20 points to the side, and is regarded highly as a trophy throughout the world.

To stalk the wary mountain goat and sheep that live among the lofty peaks of the Chagach and Kenai Mountains, the airman must possess unusual physical stamina and an unerring eye. Sure-footed among the craggy slopes, these



Hip-booted fishermen await the sudden strike of Alaskan trout.

First step toward the hunt, selecting provisions and equipment.



Big game from big country — Alaskan hunting trophy display.



Paradise (Continued)

animals clamber off at the first sight of an intruder. A telescopic sight must often be used to bag the beasts at long range. The head of a ram, its horns sometimes reaching 40 inches in length, rewards the successful hunter with a wonderful trophy.

Caution, a steady hand, and a heavy, hard-hitting rifle are prerequisites for a hunter stalking the Alaska brown, or Kodiak, bear. Weighing up to three quarters of a ton, this burly beast of the northwoods is the largest carnivorous animal on earth. Slugs from a 30-30 rifle have been known to glance off his massive skull upon striking at an angle. Smaller, but more numerous, is the black bear, frequently regarded as both a nuisance and a clown. These animals provide fine trophies, their skins and heads are famous as rugs for the sportsman's den.

Shotgun fanciers find an abundance of wildfowl to provide them with excitement in the field. The list of fowl includes grouse, spruce hen, Canadian goose, and several species of duck like the mallard, American widgeon, the ringneck, and canvasback.

The angler finds fishing beyond his fondest expectations in the many streams and lakes of Alaska. The placid surface of a clear lake erupts into a series of boiling splashes, when a lucky airman hooks a 60-pound native trout or a scrappy northern pike. And schools of salmon and halibut cruise the coastline and venture up the mouths of rivers to give fishermen thrills they will never forget. An angler testing light tackle in a swift-running stream quickly realizes his error when a hot battle with a determined salmon almost smashes his equipment to pieces.

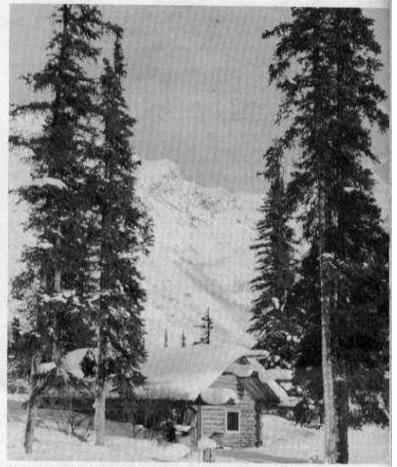
Besides Nature, man has done much to make the airman's stay in Alaska exciting and enjoyable. He doesn't have to take to the field for sport, because most airbases conduct diversified and well-rounded athletic programs. With the rising temperature of summer, bats, balls, and gloves come into play and America's favorite pastime begins another season. Few games are "called because of darkness," as Nature's inextinguishable arc light, the midnight sun, glows almost continuously. Swimming and boating in the many clear lakes attract aquatically inclined airmen. Some bases boast indoor pools to provide swimming the year round. And many a pleasant afternoon is spent on the golf links or tennis courts during the warm months.

With the first snowfall, skiing emerges as the number one outdoor sport. Later, ice skaring and hockey become popular, when winter turns ponds into natural skaring rinks. Indoors, the base gym gives the airman the opportunity to keep in shape, as baskerball, volleyball, handball, boxing, and weightlifting take the spotlight. Keglers find their satisfaction and enjoyment in the bowling alleys of the base.

No wonder the active man agrees with the natives' opinion of the Territory — it's a great land!



Beside a mountain ledge, three airmen prepare for ski run.



Majestic mountains and towering trees surround a ski ledge.