

Alaskan Perils

Life on the frontier can be perilous. Wild animals, untamed rivers, vast areas of uncharted forests or deserts could be hazardous to people who are unprepared for them. When I tell people I once lived in Alaska, they usually respond with questions or comments about the dangerous animals and severe weather. Their concept of the state is already so distorted by movies and TV they are unable to appreciate the Great Land as it actually is. So now, when that happens, I simply nod and tell them they should really try to visit Alaska someday.

How can I tell people about the exhilarating and very real fear of bears, even on the outskirts of major cities? What city dweller could truly understand the feeling of freedom experienced when there are no human neighbors within fifty miles? Can I truly expect an everyday housewife to comprehend the necessity of carrying a sleeping bag in her car? Would she understand that the price of a flat tire might be her life? For that matter, could she understand that "freezing to death" means more than just mild discomfort?

What about the summers? People usually ask about the extended days without realizing that those extra hours of sunlight pain the hillsides with riots of flowers and cause garden vegetables to grow overtime. Could my words make them appreciate the crowberry blossoms that look like time lampshades but grow so thickly

that they turn the mountain slopes snow-white? What must I say to let them taste the wild raspberries of the currants or the high-bush cranberries? Would the hair on their necks rise as I tell them of moose and bighorn sheep, of lakes and mountains, or the icy streams turned black with salmon? Would

the air, washed clean and fresh by rain and snow, really appeal to them?

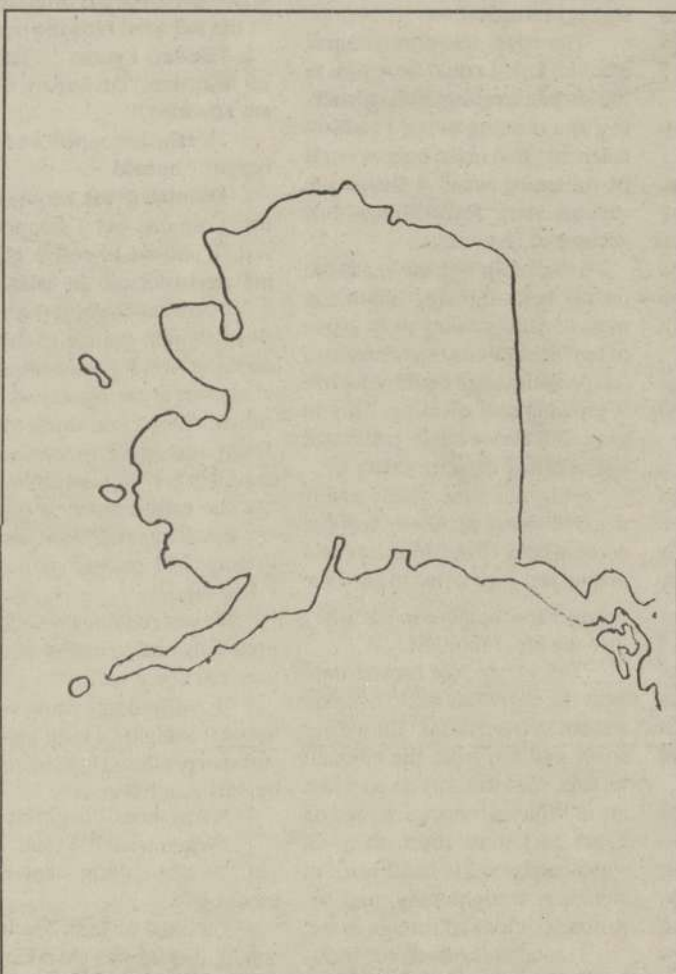
A dictionary lies on the table as I write this, but there are no words in it to describe the fall colors or the huge flights of cranes making their seasonal migrations so high in the sky that only their

voices betray them. The delicate lacework of hoarfrost on bare birch limbs outlined against a deep blue sky must be seen to be appreciated. My words can't make them feel the twinge in their noses from inhaling a 50 below, or the surge of adrenalin from the sight of the first few feet of net silvered with thousands of fish. I could as easily describe a mother's love for her child as the thrill of watching a humpback whale lift its flukes in the air or of hearing the call of a distant wolf.

The truth is, however I might try to define the feeling of life on the last frontier, there are some ideas that simply cannot be verbally conveyed. Photographs record colors and patterns of light and thus serve to remind us of past events and times. Video cameras combine sights and sounds to a degree never before experienced, but science still hasn't perfected a method of recording sights, sounds, smells and feelings all at the same time. Until that sorry day arrives people will just have to experience Alaska the hard way, and the best way, by going there.

No, I guess the greatest peril of Alaska isn't the wild country, or even the wild animals, for those things are lost in the overall grandeur of the country and of life in that country. The greatest peril is the gnawing, empty loneliness felt by those of us who can only tell people "I used to live there."

-by D.V. Yancey



If you loved me...

IF YOU LOVED ME...

...you wouldn't ground me...
just because my friends and I ran up \$75 in long distance charges just because you had to make my car payment
just because you had to pay my car insurance
just because I'm too busy having fun, to clean the bathroom
just because I haven't cleaned my room in a month
just because a friend stayed over last night, and didn't sleep on the couch as specified...we didn't do anything...
IF YOU LOVED ME...
...you wouldn't charge me room and board...
just because I have a job
just to teach me how to budget
...even if it's less than apartment rent

IF YOU LOVED ME...

...you'd let my friends sleep over... even if its almost every night even if they shower twice a day even if they raid the "fridge" even if they leave a mess even if they don't know what the "off" button means on the TV, stereo, VCR, Apple, organ, or wall even if they don't know "sign" but seem to be deaf even if they are the opposite sex ...especially when they're broke, and have nothing else to do...
IF YOU LOVED ME...
...you wouldn't make me go to school...
just because I need a diploma
just because you think I at least need a G.E.D.
just because I can get a grant for college
just because you don't think

modeling school is enough

...I can get a good job, I'm all grown up... I'm seventeen, yah know?
IF YOU LOVED ME...
...you'd support me...
you could quit doing to college full time,
you'll probably never get a high paying job anyhow
you could get another part time job, you only have two
you could get a full time job for \$5 an hour like me
you could ask your boyfriend to give us money...
or grandma ... or your other friends...
you would but me clothes, so I could save my paycheck for fun
you would give me the child support check to spend, you always
manage to pay the rent any-

how

you would make my car payments...
you know I have to have one, the bus makes me ill...
you would pay the insurance
you would buy the gas, the tires, the points and plugs
you would do my laundry, clean my room, cook my meals...
and not ask me for help
After all, I AM YOUR ONLY DAUGHTER, and all my friends' parents love them that much.
"My dearest, darling daughter, It tore my heart, to see you leave so soon... I deeply regret, that I could not afford you love."
"Mom"

-by Judy Schwartz

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Due to space considerations we were unable to publish entries written by Joe Lee, Christine Marie Benjamin and Leah Howard. We will be saving these contributions for future issues of Rhapsody.

