

# northland

**A hardy, resourceful people, the Alaskan Eskimos are also our least-understood Americans.**

PHOTOS BY OZZIE SWEET



"Tex" Nanook doffs parka for Stetson.

THE OLD JOKE about feeding ice cream to an Eskimo is no joke at all. Children of the cold North are as fond of this American delicacy as any in the deep South. Yet this and other fallacies about Alaskan natives still persist and should be supplanted by a few facts, now that the land of the midnight sun has reached the dawn of a new day as our 49th state.

Eskimos, of course, still cling to many of their old ways but where the white man's methods have proved superior, these infectiously amiable people have been quick to adapt themselves.

For one thing, Eskimos are outstanding mechanics, and they're welcome workers at many of Alaska's canneries, lumber mills, and military posts. Considering that they've had no historical background in precision instruments, it's a surprising situation. When a machine breaks down, instead of waiting for a spare part, the resourceful Eskimo will often carve a new one from an old bone or patch it with a caribou hide.

In more isolated areas, Eskimos live closer to nature, but the old ways are disappearing. Igloos, which never were more than emergency shelters, are almost nonexistent. Instead, Eskimos live in frame huts containing such things as tables and chairs, sewing machines, alarm clocks, and thermos bottles. Still ranked among the world's great hunters, Eskimos today seek fish and game more for sport than for food and clothing; these things are easier to buy in the local supermarket or through the mail-order catalogue.

One ancient art, however, is not likely to be left behind: the carving of trinkets and beads. The quick-witted Eskimo has found—as have natives the world over—that American tourists love to pay money for them.



▲ Ancient kayak, which still fascinates Alaskan tourists, may soon become as old-fashioned as horse and buggy.

Igloos are already extinct. Eskimos usually live in primitive frame huts, but many include modern conveniences.

Betrayed by a

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