

with their cousins of the western Alaskan mainland, those records are presented by James VanStone in an organized synthesis that brings the careful description of everyday Alaskan Eskimo material culture into the twentieth century. It is most fitting that this job so well begun by Lantis should be equally well completed by VanStone, who is signally qualified by his own extensive experience with both historic and recent material culture of western Alaska. Appropriately enough, his own first independent Alaskan fieldwork was a survey of recent archaeological sites on Nunivak Island in 1952.

The base of the work is the information collected by Lantis. But added to this are facts gleaned from, among other sources, the first detailed description of Nunivak and its people by Ivan Petroff, who visited the island for the eleventh U.S. census, in 1891; by George Byron Gordon, of what is now the University Museum, Philadelphia, who sojourned in 1905; by Edward Curtis, who wrote the first brief ethnographic account from his visit in 1927; by Henry B. Collins, Jr., of the Smithsonian Institution, who with his colleague T. Dale Stewart measured heads and skulls there for much of the summer of the same year (and who recommended the island to Lantis); and by Hans Himmelheber, the German ethnographer, who visited the island three years before Lantis. The more than 100 figures are principally drawings and field photographs by Lantis (some, but not all, of which have been published before), photographs of her collection now at the Museum of Anthropology, University of Kentucky; and several photographs of places and people by Himmelheber. Photographs are clear and printed on paper that reproduces very clearly.

The descriptive text on the actual material is divided among ten sections, fairly traditional in their boundaries, which include details of use and behavior as well as artifact form and technology. These treatments extend, for instance, to variation in kayak bow and stern sections between individual makers, as well as in various construction details; to food collection and methods of preparation; specific means for taking fish; to the making of birdskin parkas and identification by bird type of categories of people who might wear them.

These are not simple restatements of standard anthropological knowledge that might apply anywhere in the Yuit or Inuit world, or even anywhere in Alaska. On the one hand, Nunivak Island represents a regional subdivision of western Eskimo culture in its own right; the people are, for instance, far enough outside the regular communication network of even the adjacent mainland and Nelson Island that their speech has been classed by some linguists as a separate dialect of Yupik. Behavior follows the same pattern, in particular with regard to women, whose traditional modes are shown to have departed more from the practices of their mainland relatives than did those of the men: they split salmon differently, they made boots by a different pattern, their needle cases were distinctive, they used grass for more purposes.

One item especially welcome to this reader is an unambiguous description, with photographs, of the construction of semi-subterranean dwellings with a cribbed roof structure, rather than one supported by simple post and beams. Excavations elsewhere in southwestern Alaska had made it seem necessary that the former be the pattern, for repeatedly the four central support posts were found set so closely toward the corners that a simple beam construction could be trusted to carry the weight of a sod roof only by inhabitants totally oblivious of constant danger. And yet ethnographers — including James VanStone — had continued to refer to “four-post central” construction and to insist that in family dwellings the sod roofs were always laid only on simple crossbeams. The photographs and description of Lantis finally confirm the excavations, showing roofs built up by cribbing from four heavy posts set well out toward the corners.

Added to the descriptive presentation are valuable conclusions in which VanStone places Nunivak Island within the context of southwestern Alaskan Eskimo culture. A lengthy list of culture elements derived from the notes of Lantis, supplemented by infor-

mation from E.W. Nelson, Curtis, and others, serves to point out that a major inventory is shared with mainland southwestern Alaska, in particular with the heavily occupied region around the Kuskokwim and Yukon river mouths. A much shorter list sets Nunivak apart.

Nineteenth-century visitors to Alaska presented descriptions of the living technology that have formed our major base of such data. But a difficulty with material of this vintage — in addition to scale and murkiness of photographs — is that the collectors were too much pioneers to appreciate and record nuances that later came to seem significant.

In the present case, however, an experienced ethnographer (and sometime archaeologist) approaches a unique body of information on traditional material culture with a fully twentieth-century eye. And so this is a publication that will find its place beside the classic works on the Bering Sea for those of us who would interpret the traditional historic or prehistoric material culture of coastal southwestern Alaska. As with all of the Field Museum series, the lack of an index causes problems in the rapid location of specific facts, although the organization of the book is straightforward enough that this problem is a small one.

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SPIRIT OF THE BARRENS: DIARY OF AN ARCTIC JOURNEY. A video by PETER HARMATHY. Scarborough: See Hear Now! 1988. 27 min. Cdn\$79.

Popular accounts of travel in or about the Arctic have been part of northern literature for several generations. In more recent years, film has been added to the repertoire, as reflected in the work of John and Janet Foster and in the recent voyage “through” the Northwest Passage in a catamaran. This video, *Spirit of the Barrens*, fits into the growing interest in the North. In a real sense, however, the film tells as much about the participants as it does about the Arctic.

Spirit of the Barrens tells the story of five “ordinary people, city people with no special skills or training” who undertook to walk from Yellowknife to Coppermine, a distance of 700 km. Aided by five supply caches flown in earlier and by radio communication, the three men and two women started their odyssey on 22 April 1988. For the first 200 km, to the first cache at the source of the Yellowknife River “at the northern limit of the forest,” they man-hauled their supplies and equipment on toboggans. Indeed the soft snow delayed their arrival for a couple of days, until a cold front created a crust allowing them to proceed the final 6 km. From then on, they left the “security of the spruce forest” and headed for the vast barrenlands where there was little shelter. It was colder, too. As if the Arctic held them “captive in an ocean of soft and deep snow,” they were delayed two weeks while two members, including the narrator-cameraman, were evacuated to Yellowknife to recover from dehydration.

When the expedition recommenced on 2 June, the temperature had risen sufficiently so that only patches of snow remained. It was as though spring had given them a “gesture of good luck.” However, rivers were melting, including the Snare River, which could not be crossed. Gradual warming of the continent meant in some cases the shore ice of the lakes had melted, necessitating riding floes to the more solid ice, such as at Winter Lake. The Arctic cooperated in their northward trek, for the colder weather delayed spring; ahead were the brown barrenlands, behind a green landscape, as they “walked on the edge of spring.” The narrator indicated he was never so much aware of the seasons as in this journey. By the beginning

of July summer was upon them, with plants flourishing and temperature rising, making it "shirt-sleeve weather" had it not been for the mosquitoes. On 6 July it was recorded that they backpacked 18 km, and by 10 July they were at the last cache, some 170 km from their destination.

The pace slowed, as if to prolong the experience, as if the goal were no longer relevant. The land was now a "compelling part of their lives." They sensed the presence of the ocean some 60 km away; the weather was more unstable and damp, and temperatures changed. As they neared their destination, autumn was upon them, with leaves turning red and remnants of flowers swaying in the breeze. On 26 July, from a ridge they glimpsed the Arctic Ocean, the northern edge of the continent. Rain delayed their arrival until 30 July, when they spent a quiet and contemplative evening on the shore opposite Coppermine. The next morning they were picked up, and soon they flew back to the city.

The above sketch does not indicate some of the difficulties encountered. Early on, the travellers realized the scarcity of water and the dangers of dehydration. As well, during the manhauling stage, reflection of the sun off the snow led to sunburn and the danger of heat stroke. Later, at the end of June, one of the women collapsed, perhaps because of the water, and a medical evacuation was radioed, but she recovered before it was put into effect. Before they reached the second cache, they had to supplement the rations by hunting game — hare or ground squirrel — and even picking berries. On various occasions wind and rain kept them tent-bound. At times they forded the cold waters of rivers; at others they broke through the rotting shore ice.

The film presents several images. One is of the barrenlands (or Barrens) as a land of "disaster and ruin, a land scraped barren, strewn with boulders from the last ice age." A number of vista shots reflect this, including photographs of glacier erratics, which led to a discussion of how these were left by the last ice age. Other shots include the boreal forest in the grips of late winter and scenes of rugged mountains and low mountains eroded by ice, wind and water. The narrator, Peter Harmathy, noted that the barrenlands have no trees by which one can judge scale: consequently it is easy to misjudge size and distance. Another image presented is one of mercilessness and cruelty, when Harmathy talked of the cruelly deceiving landscape or particularly when he discussed an event when 11 of 20 died 150 years before. Vastness is another word used in the film. The initial aerial shot and narration depict the barren arctic landscape stretching uninhabited. On another occasion the narrator speaks of isolation.

Yet despite this, the film suggests it is a land of contrast — miniature (in terms of vegetation), yet vast; empty, yet full. The variety of the Arctic can be seen in some of the shots and incidents. For example, there is the flight of a ptarmigan from her nest. Gull, eagle, fox and bear are shown. One incident occurred when Shawn Ryan went to get a closer look at a wolverine on the lake ice and it started to turn on him. On two occasions caribou herds, "nomads of the North, spirits of the landscape," passed by, their hooves moving noisily over the rocks. Some of the rocks looked as if they had been sculpted by man, as did some of the melting ice pans. An interesting illustration was the shot of a soaring raptor juxtaposed with a native legend of a bird creating the world.

These images of word and photography reflect the view of the narrator. In many respects, then, the film is a lyrical representation of his thoughts as he reacted to the Arctic.

There are a few problems. Although maps are used to outline the trip, basically there are no indications of specific places, such as where the caches were, or some of the features named in the film — such as Snare River, Winter Lake or Napatiluk Lake. Some references could be clearer; for example, the expedition event noted should have been identified as the first overland expedition of John Franklin, as distinct from the more famous sea expedition in which all 129 died. In this first expedition death had much to do with

poor leadership. There is no mention of Greenstockings Lake as being named after a native woman who played a role in this first Franklin expedition. Mention of the Franklin expedition earlier might have underlined, even more, the cruelty of the barrenlands. The massive falls towards the end of the film might have been identified.

Another concern relates to the background of the members. While the city-origin is mentioned, one wonders if it was other than Yellowknife. All of the motives would be interesting to know, given the conclusion that the narrator did not become a stronger person, as well as the opinion that there was a genuine need for wilderness and a place completely untouched. They did feel defeated to know they were not part of the land, but they felt that despite the physical pain and time the experience gave them much. Finally, the viewer wonders what special preparations were made for the expedition, especially as the video lists credits for 26 people and organizations that helped them.

Some of the views or conclusions raise questions. For example, there is a statement about wondering why the land was abandoned, completely empty. However, contemporary natives still use the barrenlands to hunt, even if they might live in a community. The narrator expresses the hope that civilization never reaches the area, and yet not only do native cultures use the area but for a very long time aspects of the larger Euro-Canadian culture, whether geologists, geographers, biologists or even tourists, have been using the region covered in the film.

The film was probably designed for a television production, or at least for schools, though teachers would have to devise the particular lessons to be learned at various levels only after careful review of the many facets presented in the film. The expert will not find much new, though this need not be a drawback, for it should be remembered that an early National Film Board production *Across Arctic Ungava* dealing with scientists about 1948 was also more one of image and hardship. Thus the film does present the Arctic as seen by five city people. Moreover, at times the narration is full of imagery. These two features then become the strength of this film.

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SOVEREIGNTY OR SECURITY? GOVERNMENT POLICY IN THE CANADIAN NORTH, 1936-1950. By SHELAGH D. GRANT. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. 385 p., maps, illus., index, bib. Hardbound. Cdn\$29.95.

Shelagh Grant's detailed and competent study of Canada's northern policy in the crucial 1936-50 period is sure to spark considerable debate. The question that frames the study — sovereignty or security — clearly bedeviled officials and politicians during the time under investigation and, as recent discussion over submarines, pipelines and Canada's ability to defend its interests in the Arctic reveal, through to the present. (There was a third element — stewardship over northern Native peoples — that Grant considers and which was clearly a major element in policy discussions at that time.) It was in this period, as Grant carefully documents, that Canadian officials finally overcame an attitude towards the North that Jack Granatstein characterized as "a fit of absence of mind" and asserted full colonial control over its northern appendages.

The volume begins with an overview of Canadian policy towards its northern lands, well-covered ground but essential to what follows. After a brief description of the North during the depression years, Grant turns to political and diplomatic considerations. A description