

Eventually, when the expedition was down to only a little tea, almost no tobacco, a sprinkling of flour, some dried meat, and a steady diet of raw fish, Irwin told Bahr he was going to leave. The trail boss gave him a cheque for his work, and wished him good luck. Irwin trekked to nearby Barter Island, where he was made welcome by Tom Gordon who supplied him with food and a dog team to continue his long journey.

## *The Fourth Year*

### CHAPTER II

## Stampede

Everything appeared to be going right for Bahr in late autumn, 1932. The deer were well rested, the does had been bred, the crew seemed to be amiable, and with the exception of the limited supply of "white man's" food, the drive was in the best condition it had been since the summer on the Kobuk River.

Expectations for the arrival of the herd were optimistic on the Canadian side of the line. Through the fall the Lapp families pitched in to put up additional fencing. A summer corral was built six miles down the Mackenzie River from the reindeer station. The main camp was expanded to include not only cabins for the Lapps, but also for Peter and Tommy Wood and their families, as the brothers had agreed to take on the job of working with the Canadians for at least two years.

Ironically, at just this time the administrators of the drive — Leonard Baldwin and the Lomens — reached a peak in their worries over the progress of the herd. Bahr was not the most articulate of writers; much work was needed in reading his messages. Even the Lomens, who were adept at fathoming what was going on in the old man's mind, were hard put to comprehend their foreman's plans. Someone was needed to tabulate his performance and to relate the drive's progress.

To compound the poor communications, what news there was from the drive seemed to be tainted by a litany of criticism drifting into the Lomen offices from the men Bahr had fired the preceding summer. They had now reached Nome and Kotzebue and presented their side of the argument — a refrain definitely not in Bahr's favour. The trail boss could offer no defence against these diatribes because he was still in the field. This disparagement served to exacerbate the worries of the administrators, and was reflected in a letter that Baldwin wrote to Hume on October 17 in which he sought assistance for Bahr's crew in the field to prevent "the straying of the herd and in warding off the attack of wolves."<sup>1</sup>

Baldwin, with a reputation to protect, suggested that Erling Porsild and the Canadian Lapps join up with Bahr to make doubly certain the herd was delivered to its destination the following spring, 1933. He emphasized the fact that Porsild should join the herd for his knowledge of the area and to

reassure Bahr as to what was ahead of him. He wrote: "Mr. Porsild has been over the territory to be traversed at least three times and has made a report on the feeding conditions." Baldwin was of the opinion that "Andrew [Bahr] is imagining not only real difficulties that do exist but many that do not."

This letter was to touch off the biggest dispute of the drive, at the centre of which was Erling Porsild.

Hume, under whose jurisdiction the reindeer contract was now administered, had no objections to Baldwin's requests and, in a note delineating Baldwin's points, instructed Erling Porsild to shift his three Lapps westward to help Bahr. Hume added: "The government representatives [i.e. Porsild] will be subject to the orders of the superintendent of the drive."<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the request did not go over very well with Porsild was evident in his reply. He lambasted the chairman for entertaining the idea of employing the Lapps and himself on the trail. And he injected a few caustic remarks that bordered on prejudice in his bitterness over being committed as a herder under the supervision of Bahr.

Porsild informed Hume that the three Lapps would not go. The terms of their contract stated they were to act as reindeer herders at the station, and there were no provisions to undertake extensive journeys to Alaska. He said a prolonged trip at that time of the year involved great personal risk and would separate the Lapps from their families for an indefinite period. The incensed botanist

took the opportunity to point out that Mikkell Pulk, who had accompanied him on his herculean journey of the winter before, had received no extra allowance for his effort.

The irate Dane stated he was still suffering from rheumatism and digestive complications which resulted from that trip. He complained that after six years with the department he now received less consideration and remuneration than when he had been first employed. One last straw as far as Porsild was concerned was his apparent appointment as a herder: "I have never undertaken to herd reindeer personally," he seethed, "and I do not intend to."

Erling Porsild's temper hit the boiling point with respect to serving under Bahr: "Your instruction to place myself under the direction and subject to instructions of the Lapp, Andrew Bahr, I can only consider a personal insult." Porsild concluded the wire by saying he would quit if the instructions were allowed to stand.<sup>3</sup>

Communications by wire and letter were difficult at the best of times. Innuendos could be read in that had not been intended the way they seemed. Erling Porsild may have overreacted to the telegram, but then, he had been six years on the project, ruining his health in the process, and was like a bomb waiting for a charge to set it off. The telegram had done just that.

Erling's bitter reply was forwarded to Rowatt, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, who poured oil on the troubled waters: "There is no desire or

intention of asking Mr. Porsild to act as a reindeer herder, but he is asked to assist Andrew Bahr with advice because he and his brother are the only persons who know the country through which the herd is to travel."<sup>4</sup>

Meantime, Leonard Baldwin in New York divined that the crux of the problem was money. He offered twenty-five hundred dollars extra to Porsild and the three Lapps if they would assist Bahr and his men until June 1, 1933, or until the drive was completed, whichever came first. This proposal was relayed to the reindeer station and the contentious point was resolved when Erling Porsild tentatively accepted the offer. He assigned his brother to the task of leading the Lapps to Bahr, and divvied up the allocated funds so that Bob Porsild received one thousand dollars and the Lapps, five hundred dollars each. Erling, because of health problems, would remain at the reindeer station, replacing Bob as head of the construction program there.

Erling Porsild drew up a contingency contract pertaining to the unscheduled venture, which the three Lapps signed. Firstly, they vowed to remain in the field for the prescribed length of the contract. Secondly, they consented to work under Bahr's orders; and thirdly, they agreed to forfeit all claims to extra compensation if they left before fulfilling the terms of the contract. On November 22, 1932, Bob Porsild, Mikkell Pulk, Mathis Hatta, and Aslak Tornensis left the delta for Bahr's encampment. The drive at this point certainly looked like it was

near termination. Bahr had commenced moving eastward in November with a good crew of eight men, including himself, and four reinforcements who were on the way. This would bring the crew to its largest complement since the drive began.

The Canadian delegation had a good run west and met up with the herd at Icy Reef on December 4 after a two-hundred-mile trip by dog team and skis. The men travelled on land for most of the trip, rather than the easier route by sea ice, in order to check out the feed, which the Lapps estimated to be adequate for the herd.

Porsild's arrival was not only a surprise to Bahr, but also tantamount to giving another dollar to a man who already had a million. Bahr's statement put Bob Porsild in a dilemma. He explained his instructions to the Lapp, realizing Bahr did not know of the hullabaloo on the "outside" that had led up to his arrival. Bahr heard him out and then acceded to Porsild and his men staying.

The situation with regards to the trail drive now took on the characteristics of a syllogism gone askew. The previous July, Bahr had requested more men to help him handle the drive. Alfred Lomen had referred this need to Baldwin, who prevailed on Hume, who told Erling Porsild, who sent Bob Porsild and three Lapps, who finally arrived six months after the request. Yet the arrival of the "help" would have the unintended effect of almost ruining the operation. One reason had to do with the subtle psychology of men engaged in such a

solitary expedition. Though they may gripe, and be lonely, the intrusion of new personalities may upset the unspoken, delicate balance among the crew members. Second, rations were already at rock bottom, without having four more mouths to feed. Porsild brought supplies along, but not enough to keep his group in food forever. This situation was to initiate a grinding dispute that all but destroyed the drive because of ill feelings and rancour on the part of the newly arrived Lapps. They did not get enough food from the trail boss.

Bob Porsild's presence, however, offered one advantage: he provided more intelligible source of communications between Bahr and the administrators in Ottawa, New York, Seattle, and Nome.

Andrew Bahr and his expanded outfit drove the reindeer east from Icy Reef to reach Herschel Island on schedule. Here, he ran into trouble over goods that were supposed to have been dropped off there by trader C. T. Pedersen.

Captain Pedersen was a legendary figure in the Arctic. For thirty years, his Northern Whaling and Trading Company had served small communities scattered along the expanse of the Arctic coast, from Alaska on the west, right across to Ellesmere Island in the eastern Canadian Arctic. In order to better serve far-flung customers, his company placed offices in New York City, and in Oakland, California. Of all the trading ventures that have ever existed in the north, it is doubtful if any were more consistently exposed to greater hazards than

that of Pedersen in his little supply schooner, the *Patterson*. Year after year, he plied the ice-clogged shores of the Arctic, as dependable to his customers as the neighbourhood newspaper boy or mailman. His orders for equipment and supplies were received up to a year ahead of time, and often letters posted one year did not reach him until the next.

Pedersen had dropped off supplies during the summer to be held in bond for Bahr at Herschel Island. He left instructions with the police corporal stationed there to release the goods when Bahr arrived. The corporal, however, had moved to Aklavik for the winter and apparently failed to advise his replacement of the directive. Thus the trail boss was turned down when he asked for the shipment.

Frustrated by this turn of events, Bahr solicited the Hudson's Bay Company post at Herschel for what stores they had available, but did not get much. This foul-up was to be a harbinger of more difficulties.

The pilgrims moved out again. The weather held good until the herd reached the vicinity of Kay Point, forty miles east of Herschel Island, near the end of January 1933. The expedition was hit by a series of blizzards that raked the coast with howling winds and blinding snow. Again the reindeer were in jeopardy because under those conditions the

menace of wolves was at its greatest. Mathis Hatta described the situation:

We would have to be out watching the herd, walking around them, night and day looking for wolves and chasing some of the deer that would stray and get lost.

It was sixty below — sometimes seventy — and cold winds. We would work in shifts of twenty-four hours, but sometimes we would have to keep working for forty-eight hours or more. We didn't get much sleep anytime.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that Hatta constantly returned to the subject of wolves in his recollections emphasized how serious a menace the predators were. He continued:

We were always looking for wolves. They wouldn't come very close in when it was light, but they would come around in the dark and when it was stormy. You couldn't see them. You would just fire in the air and scare them away. But they got quite a few reindeer just the same.

They were mostly white wolves like the snow, but some were brown. There were sometimes twenty in a bunch.

The bad weather meant the drive hardly moved, but this did not mean the herders had it any easier.

We would move the herd about a mile a day. They would scrape the snow away with their front feet to eat the moss. We had to keep watch, walking around them — sometimes run like reindeer . . . it wasn't so bad while the deer kept close together in one bunch, but when some of them strayed we had to go after them.

The storms persisted as the expedition crept eastward, and as the reindeer moved farther on, the British and Richardson mountain ranges closed in on the coast. These bastions furnished a refuge for even larger packs of wolves that carried out their incessant raids against the deer.

The onslaught of wind and snow persisted through the entire month of February, battering men, dogs, and deer with unrelenting ferocity. The drovers knew they were engaged in a race against time because the fawning period was expected in the second week of April. Each day, the does grew heavier and it became more difficult for them to travel. If the herd did not reach the Mackenzie crossing point quickly enough, the trek over the ice could not be undertaken at all because of the awkwardness of the females and the lack of food to sustain them on the twenty-mile open stretch of Mackenzie Bay.

Bahr and his men reached Shingle Point on March 1, 1933. The herd had travelled one hundred and fifty miles in four months, averaging little

better than a mile a day. This was good time, considering the adversity of the elements.

Shingle Point harboured an Anglican mission school for Inuit youths. The school was run by the chief of the mission, who was assisted by a small staff of three teachers from England. Forty students of both sexes attended the school and were taught English and fundamental grade school subjects.

A week after arriving at the mission, Andrew Bahr found time to dispatch a letter to Ralph Lomen in Seattle. The tone of the note was optimistic. He seemed to be satisfied that the deer would recuperate from the depleting effects of the last four months on the trail. In his colourful vernacular, he wrote:

Just a few lines to let you know that we are here now at Shingle Point. We had hard times to get here on account of the continuous storms, short, short days and bad feeding conditions. No moss only here and there spot. Our herd gotten very weak, quite a few deer gotten lost, killed by wolves and dead on the road. We been here now for one week, here is good feed, moss and the snow condition is good also the weather has been good since we came here. We are soon going to move again thirty miles more south easterly direction close to the crossing place. The crossing will be the first week of April. Mr. Porsild and myself we are going after a couple of days to

examine the crossing place. We will go as far as their station.<sup>6</sup>

A dialogue now commenced between Bahr and Bob Porsild over when the herd should be delivered. Bob was anxious to drive the deer across the bay ice as quickly as possible. Every day of delay meant the pregnant does would find it that much more difficult to reach Ellice Island, the first of several that squatted like so many stepping stones across the bay, until the reindeer station was reached. Porsild judged that these islands were at least sufficient in moss to entice the herd forward as it was pushed through the delta to its destination. The distance from Ellice Island to the reindeer station was about sixty miles.

Bahr wanted to do just the opposite. Obviously, economic considerations influenced their two lines of reasoning to a certain degree. If the animals were delivered immediately, as Porsild wanted, the fawns would be dropped at the station, and the Canadian government would gain up to one thousand calves free of charge. Of even more importance to Porsild was the fact that their birth on the east side of the Mackenzie would centre their homing instinct where it should be.

On the other hand, if Bahr held the animals and managed to increase the size of the herd, the Lomens would receive more money than if the crossing was made before fawning. The problem with holding the deer was that the young animals

would not be capable of making such a journey without at least a month to gain strength. However, by that time the bay ice would be impossible to cross because it would be rotten, and the herd would have to skulk in the field until the next winter.

Porsild was persistent in his argument, and Bahr eventually gave in to his reasoning. They went to the mouth of the Blow River, aptly named for the monumental gales that frequently swept the area, to survey the crossing point. It looked satisfactory to them and they returned to Shingle Point.

The words "beware the ides of March" could have been offered to Porsild and Bahr as a warning worth heeding. March 16 brought down a storm so fierce that it rivalled in intensity any blow that had ever hit the Shingle Point region. The vicious winds ripped roofs off some of the buildings spread along the coast, already built low and shaped to withstand Arctic winds. Snow piled up in deep drifts on the lee side of every standing object. These crystals took on the velocity of buckshot due to the wind. Neither man nor deer could face such pellets. The men could not keep their faces into the wind under this barrage and turned from it. Even the reindeer, contrary to their usual habit, drifted with the tempest.

Bahr and Porsild realized that holding the herd was all but impossible with visibility at less than a foot, but the attempt had to be made. The drovers rushed into the night accompanied by their shepherd dogs. The latter knew by scent where the deer

were and raced to contain them, darting this way and that to stop the sallies of those deer that made a run for it. Despite the severity of the storm, the shepherd dogs might have held the reindeer if it were not for the inevitable appearance of wolves, whose distant howls summoning the pack carried forth on the wind like the mournful wails of banshees forecasting the imminence of death. Under cover of snow and darkness, the inexhaustible marauders of the northern plains infiltrated the herd, and flushed it like a covey of ptarmigan. There was little the valiant herd dogs could do in the face of such attacks. Fortunately for them, the wolves were bent on bigger game or the dogs, too, would have fallen victim to the carnivores' powerful jaws.

The herders fired their guns into the air in order to fend off the wolves, but to try and hit one was impossible. Even scare tactics failed as the rifles' reports were lost in the howling wind.

When the storm finally subsided the drovers set about the difficult, painstaking job of rounding up the deer. This meant donning skis and launching themselves in the direction in which the deer were last seen. The extent and length of the storm often determined how far the animals had travelled. Wolf attacks fragmented and dispersed the deer even more. If sled deer were held during the storm, they, too, would be enlisted for the roundup. They could be counted on to scent the others while at the same time pulling a searcher on a sled.

One important chore was to find the nucleus of the herd. No matter how violent the storm, there was usually at least one group substantially larger than the rest, and to that group the other deer would be attracted when driven near it. The job of rounding up a stampeded herd was always difficult because it strained all the resources of the drive to the utmost. The entire complement of men would have to be used because of the time factor involved — the longer the deer were left unattended, the more fractious and difficult they were to control when they finally were found. Thus, at times the herder might go three or four days with virtually no sleep, grabbing food on the run, cooking over little primus stoves they packed with them to warm up beans frozen in cakes carried in the pockets of their parkas.

This debacle was one of those occasions. It took more than a week to round up the herd, and the results of their labour indicated a ruinous setback. Many of the does, heavy with fawns, either died from exhaustion while struggling through the blizzard, or were killed by wolves. The final count, when it was all over, showed that three hundred deer had been lost. This reverse showed how vulnerable a trail drive of deer could be — and would remain until final delivery and counting of the animals at the corrals on the east side of the Mackenzie delta.

After surveying the remnants of the herd, Bob Porsild and Bahr were both in agreement that it



would be futile to go ahead with an attempt to cross Mackenzie Bay. Bob hired a dog team to take him the seventy-five miles to Aklavik, where he filed a report with the Canadian government and wrote the Lomen brothers of the loss. Coming from Porsild, this message presented a more explicit conception of the tremendous toll exacted by the elements, and served to partially exonerate Bahr in the face of criticism that he was deliberately delaying the drive:

In my opinion, no effort has been spared since we connected with the herd in December to effect delivery this spring. Extremely contrary weather condition have prevailed and only by luck have four human lives not been lost while attempting to regain control of deer during blizzards and wolf attacks. Herd still numbers about two thousand head.<sup>7</sup>

Porsild went on to the reindeer station after filing his report, as there would be no need for his services at the herd. The deer would now have to be held through the fawning season, then grazed on the west side of the delta through the summer and fall. Porsild judged a crossing could be attempted in November 1933.

Bahr took a welcome "leave of absence" from the herd by accompanying Porsild to the reindeer station, where he conferred briefly with Erling before returning to the herd.

## CHAPTER 12

### Too Long on the Trail

Leonard Baldwin, after a sudden illness, died at Methodist Episcopal Hospital in Brooklyn, New York on January 25, 1933. He was sixty-six. His death was not only a great personal loss to the Lomens, but removed an individual who was of prime importance to their operations, both as vice-president and financial supporter.

Leonard had taken on the task of principal correspondent and negotiator with the Canadian government in respect to the reindeer drive. The parties to the contract had been brought together through his offices, and being somewhat of a risk-taker in his own right, Leonard had worked hard to make the venture a success. His interest in people was an integral part of his lifestyle. In underwriting the Lomen brothers in their Alaskan ventures, he had been aware that he was also helping the

Inuits of the region. His empathy for the disadvantaged was exemplified by his other philanthropical gestures. He served for twenty-five years as president of the Young Men's Christian Association in Orange County, New Jersey, and as Chairman of the Welfare Federation in that county for two years. He was a modest man who avoided the limelight. An example of this was an "oration" he gave at Drew University (originally founded as a religious institution) to which he had donated a building. The speech lasted ninety seconds: "It would," he said, "aid Drew to send forth better men, better preachers, better doers of his word."<sup>1</sup>

Arthur Baldwin stepped into the breach to fulfill his brother's commitments with respect to the reindeer operations, taking his place working with Carl Lomen and the Canadians. Arthur was known for his cheerful disposition, though he was not insensitive to the seriousness of financial setbacks. An example of Arthur's outlook was a jingle he wrote and sent to an executive of a freight company that was threatening to sue his firm for supplies lost when a Baldwin-Lomen ship was sunk by the polar ice pack:

The directors think your friendship  
 Something fine and great  
 But God just took the *Silver Wave*  
 And with it, took your freight.<sup>2</sup>

It was obvious that Baldwin had lost a lot more than had the freight company. The executive decided not to sue.

Arthur Baldwin's strength of character would not let mishaps deter him, which stood him well as 1933 unfurled. Though the year had commenced on an optimistic note, by the end of April, hopes of all concerned had plunged to the opposite end of the scale. Leonard's death was a severe blow to the drive, but the disruption and loss of deer in the storm foretold even greater difficulties. The Lomen company could now expect the expedition to drain their funds of another thirty thousand dollars to keep the drive going for at least another nine months. In addition, the Canadian government suffered from the embarrassment of now having a new reindeer station built with no reindeer in it. This further complicated the original contract signed by the Lapps with the government.

As drawn up by Erling Porsild, this agreement failed to envision that there would be no animals for the immigrant herders to tend after they arrived. Consequently, the part of the agreement offering the Lapps a bonus of fifty cents a fawn for each fawn born in the spring could not be applied, nor could the offer of reindeer meat and skins sufficient for the Laplanders' own consumption and dress. Another complication as far as the Lapps were concerned was that they had assumed that the drive would be finished before the "expiry" date (June 1, 1933) of the supplementary contract for five hundred dollars that they had signed, whereas it now locked them into staying in the field, with still no end in sight. Thus the Laplanders were

concerned about their future, and not in a good frame of mind.

Bahr had no choice but to pasture the reindeer along the Blow River after the storm, as the does were too weak to move anywhere else. They were now in the shadows of the Richardson Mountains, or right in the wolves' front yard. As fawning began, the men got little sleep and were on almost constant patrol. Nerves became frazzled and tempers short. Out on the long, nocturnal watches, a man had plenty of time to brood, and as a result, any imagined slight or indifference while in camp could be nurtured during the protracted lonely periods afield. Real or fancied ills were magnified by the emptiness of the tundra. Bickering between the Lapps and Inuits ensued. Tornensis, Pulk, and Hatta chose to camp by themselves because of their increasing resentment of Peter and Tommy Wood, whom they contended ran the drive the way they wanted to with little or no consultation from Bahr. The fact that all of the men were existing on meagre rations made the situation even worse. This added to the mental burden of the Lapps, for they were aware that the Wood brothers and other Inuits from Alaska were making from two to four times more money than were they. Not only were the Lapps irritated over their beggarly wages, but they claimed it stigmatized them as being inferior in the eyes of the Inuits.<sup>3</sup>

The supply situation was so bad it bordered on the farcical. By May, Bahr was almost desperate:

"... this country has been very poor, no fox, no caribou, no game, no grub in stores, only a little flour at Aklavik . . . We live monthly on game but you know the game is against the law, too, but have to do something to save life this spring."<sup>4</sup> The fawning season was almost over when Bahr wrote the letter. By then he had moved the herd a little westward from the Blow River to fresher pasture.

Carl Lomen had been informed of the Lapps' general dissatisfaction with field conditions and offered to extend their supplementary pay for another year if they would remain with Bahr. In addition, because a skeleton crew was still needed at the reindeer station, he agreed to pay the wages of the men hired to take the Lapps' place while they were in the field.

Hume transmitted this information to his ranking man in the Mackenzie delta, Dr. Urquhart, and asked him to journey to the reindeer camp to confer with Bahr and find out what exactly the Lapps wanted.

Urquhart travelled by dog team to Shingle Point, and with Bahr as interpreter, went into conference with the Lapps. They told the doctor they were not satisfied with their contract and would not extend it on the same terms when it came up again for renewal on June 1. They wanted supplemental pay for remaining with the herd. Urquhart, in turn, advised them that under the terms of their agreement they were obligated to stay with the deer if so requested. He said their families would be

transported to them for the summer, and additional food and supplies would be furnished to them by the government. This appeared to appease the herders. However, Urquhart was not able to get a signed agreement before returning to Aklavik. Even he had reservations about the sincerity of the Laplanders' intentions as to whether they would honour the contract or not. He sent a note to Erling Porsild, and advised him to transport the Lapps' families to the herd come summer, then added laconically: "... if their husbands are still working."<sup>5</sup>

Bahr himself had been in the field so long, and separated from his wife, that he was beginning to worry about his financial affairs back home. He was very disturbed over the fact that in three years he had received no notices indicating any money had been deposited into his Seattle bank account. He was worried because payments had to be made on the two apartment houses he owned, and wrote to Ralph Lomen about it:

If my wife call in to your office, please be kind and explain her. She will write to me. If you haven't paid anything yet, then you have to pay now with six per cent interest compound semi-annually. We are paying six per cent ourselves you know. Hoping this will find you approval.<sup>6</sup>

The adage that when it rains it pours could not be more apropos than as it applied to this reindeer

drive. The three Lapps from the Mackenzie ultimately reached the end of their rope and on June 1 quit the drive. They cited poor food and low pay as the reasons. They physically left the camp near Shingle Point and set out on foot across the ice of Mackenzie Bay on a straight line toward the reindeer station. It was an incredible walk. Only a Lapp or an Inuit ever would have attempted such an extemporaneous hike in that region under such conditions.

Warm, fresh water from the outflow of the Mackenzie River made the bay ice extremely hazardous at that time of the year. Stymied by overflows and open leads in the sea ice, ripped by blizzards, plagued by oscillating temperatures, and constantly aware of the dangers of polar bears,<sup>7</sup> the three Lapps struggled across the wide expanse of ice and treeless islands for twenty-one days before they finally staggered into the reindeer station on the east side of the Mackenzie delta. Once home, and apparently none the worse for wear, they voiced their complaints to Erling Porsild.

Mathis Hatta was the spokesman for the others. He contended that from the time they reached the reindeer camp, they were given poor fare at the dinner table and were on the point of starvation. He said their foot gear and clothing were inadequate, and that Bahr was doing nothing about it. Porsild heard them out and evaluated their grievances.

The ramifications of their departure were not

long in coming as wires began to hum with censure and recrimination. Erling Porsild attempted to explain to the Canadian government what had happened and the reasons for it, based on the Lapps' version of events. Porsild was the man who had hired them and the responsibility for their performance rested on his shoulders. Erling was a hard-working, conscientious young man who believed in doing the best he could for his employer. In fact, he may have been overly zealous in his initial bargaining with the Lapps. The original contract was parsimonious to an extreme and could be attributed to his inexperience, and to basic prejudices. No man is without the latter, though such opinions tend to veer in different directions and interests, and can be both positive and negative in nature. He wrote:

"Lapps have primitive minds, and reasonable latitude must be allowed in dealings with them."<sup>8</sup> Thus, he explained his forbearance concerning the Lapps' abjuration of their contract. Porsild's solution was in keeping with loyalty to his employer. He suggested that the Lomen brothers should reduce the pay of their herders to bring the scale to the level of his Lapps, rather than to increase the Lapps' pay. He neglected to augur the effect of such a proposal on the Lomen employees if the idea was adopted. Plainly, implementation of it would have been disastrous.

Porsild flatly told the Lapps he would fire them for their precipitate action if they did not go back

to the drive. Under that threat, the Lapps agreed to go. Erling supplied them with a canoe, and as soon as the ice went out of Mackenzie Bay, he sent the Lapps on their way.

Erling Porsild now thought the situation needed a radical remedy. Despite the apparent earlier vindication of Bahr, he advised Hume he thought the Wood brothers should be fired, and that Bahr be released and a "white man" hired in his place. He was none too complimentary of Bahr:

"Personal contact with Bahr," he wrote, "who in April visited the station one week convinces me he is no longer capable of maintaining discipline or handling the situation. When the drive started, he was too old and since has aged so much he is not even capable of carrying on intelligent conversation."

Hume sent a copy of Porsild's wire to the Lomen brothers with the explanation that as far as the government was concerned, the note was "forwarded without prejudice to existing commitments."<sup>9</sup>

Though Porsild's wire did nothing to improve ethnic harmony, it did achieve concrete results. The Lomens, who had been waffling for three years over hiring someone to oversee Bahr, finally were moved to act. Firstly, Carl Lomen authorized Bahr to dismiss the Wood brothers, though it was more of a request than an order. Ostensibly, Bahr told the two men they were being let go because the drive was nearly over, and their services would therefore not

be needed. Also, since the health of the mens' families was not good — Peter had lost his infant daughter, Helen, to pneumonia the previous December, and his wife was not well — Bahr stressed the fact that the Woods' dismissal was more of an accommodation for them than anything else.

However, the real reason the Lomens let them go was to accommodate the Canadians. Since the drive was now close to its destination, it was more important to cater to the customer's wishes than not to do so. The skills of the Woods could be sacrificed to insure harmony among the ultimate permanent herders. Tommy and Peter agreed to leave as soon as a coastwise vessel was available.

Alfred Lomen contacted Dan Crowley, who had done such an excellent job for them in the past, and placed him again in the more active field superintendent's role. Crowley journeyed north from California to Seattle, Vancouver, and Edmonton. Yet even while Dan was in the process of being rehired, the upheaval concerning the reindeer drive continued.

This time the storm swirled around Bob Porsild, who in disgust quit his job at the reindeer station. Bob told Hume that he thought he was slated to be the man in charge of running the reindeer station, not Erling, who had in effect taken over his position. Bob alluded to his brother's poor health as making it impossible for him to handle the heavy physical tasks required to maintain the camp. Besides, he was aware that his brother was angling

for a botanist job in Ottawa, and had no intention of remaining at the camp. Bob predicted the reindeer experiment was "foredoomed to failure" for those reasons.

Bob Porsild and his family departed Aklavik up the Mackenzie aboard the riverboat *Distributor* in July. Crowley was told that he had just missed Porsild when he caught the same boat, now headed back downriver, in August.

Crowley's arrival in Aklavik gave another dimension to the reindeer drive. The Lomens now had a permanent appointee on the scene who was a combination of those extra attributes that were sorely needed from the beginning. He was a hardy man, of even disposition, and possessed a natural flair for diplomacy. Crowley displayed these resources immediately on landing at Aklavik, when he met Erling Porsild and his wife on the shore and invited them to lunch aboard the *Distributor*. Their conversation was cordial. Porsild briefed Dan on the status of the drive. He told Crowley the herd had been moved from Shingle Point to Kay Point, where the deer could be watched quite handily along the finite limits of the peninsula which was surrounded on three sides by the Arctic Ocean. The feed there was ample. Porsild informed Crowley that the Lapps' families had joined them. He said he would be going to the drive's location in a month to pick up the wives and children and bring them back for the winter. As far as Porsild knew, everything in the field was running smoothly. Crowley caught a ride

on the RCMP boat *St. Roch* when it sailed west for Herschel Island and went ashore at Kay Point to visit the herd. Bahr appeared to be in good spirits. He was happy with the performance of his crew, which now consisted of three Inuits — Mark Noksana, Terrence Driggs, and the indefatigable Edwin Allen — and the three Canadian Lapps.

Crowley found that Andy Bahr (like Erling Porsild) was overly zealous in protecting his employer's interests:

He [Bahr] was glad I was going to Herschel and told me to have a talk with the Wood brothers, also to write to you and tell you not to pay Wesley any more money than he had offered him. That he did not hire Wesley until a year ago this spring, and at that time he did not tell him how much wages he was to receive. In settling with him, he paid him at the rate of \$25 per month. Although another boy hired about the same time and the same age as Wesley, receives \$75 per month. There is no doubt Andrew is working for the best interests of the company, but I am afraid he sometimes drives too sharp a bargain.<sup>10</sup>

Crowley continued on to Herschel Island, where he met the Wood brothers, who were awaiting the arrival of a schooner to take them home. Their version of the relationships in camp was different from that of the Lapps. According to Peter and Tommy, the Canadian Lapps did not have the

welfare of the herd at heart. The Wood brothers even went so far as to say they discovered the newcomers had once slaughtered a reindeer and hidden the skin and carcass in the snow prior to carting the meat to camp in their packs and hiding it. They also claimed Hatta, Tornensis, and Pulk concocted some form of "home brew" and would drink it to extreme. They accused Bahr of favouritism towards his countrymen, only one of whom had herded reindeer on a permanent basis in Norway.

Crowley reported that the Woods were completely loyal to Andrew Bahr and had nothing but praise for him as a man doing the very best he could. By way of response to Erling Porsild's charge that the Wood brothers had been running the drive, Crowley observed that if they were, it was in the best interests of the Lomen company. The superintendent assessed the Wood brothers as being "very good reindeer men, honest and willing workers, and had I arrived on the scene ten days earlier, I doubt very much if they would now be going."

The Lomen brothers, on the basis of their own long experience in dealing with herdsmen, sensed a personal antipathy on the part of Erling Porsild towards Andrew Bahr, and decided that Bahr's letters did not appear to reflect any sort of mental or physical collapse as Erling contended. Carl recalled that Porsild had always been against Bahr from the moment he was selected by the Lomens to head the drive. Furthermore, "Porsild has made recommendations to Andrew which, if followed, would have

cost us the larger number of the deer now on the drive. The officials at Ottawa are not sold on Porsild, but are in the same position as we are — unable to change their leader at this time.”<sup>11</sup>

Only Scandinavians, whose brotherly quarrels among nations are commonly admitted, could comprehend the squabble going on among the various parties involved in the drive. All of the individuals involved fit the “Norsemen” mold in one way or another, including the Wood brothers, who as Inuit, were also intensely proud individuals.

Carl predicted that “Porsild is a stubborn Dane and he will continue to oppose Andrew, lining up his Lapps against our people, and this might cause great losses to the herd and to us.”

Lomen did not completely exonerate Bahr, either. He recognized the fact that Bahr may have been delaying the drive to get the extra funds to keep up the payments on his Seattle apartments.

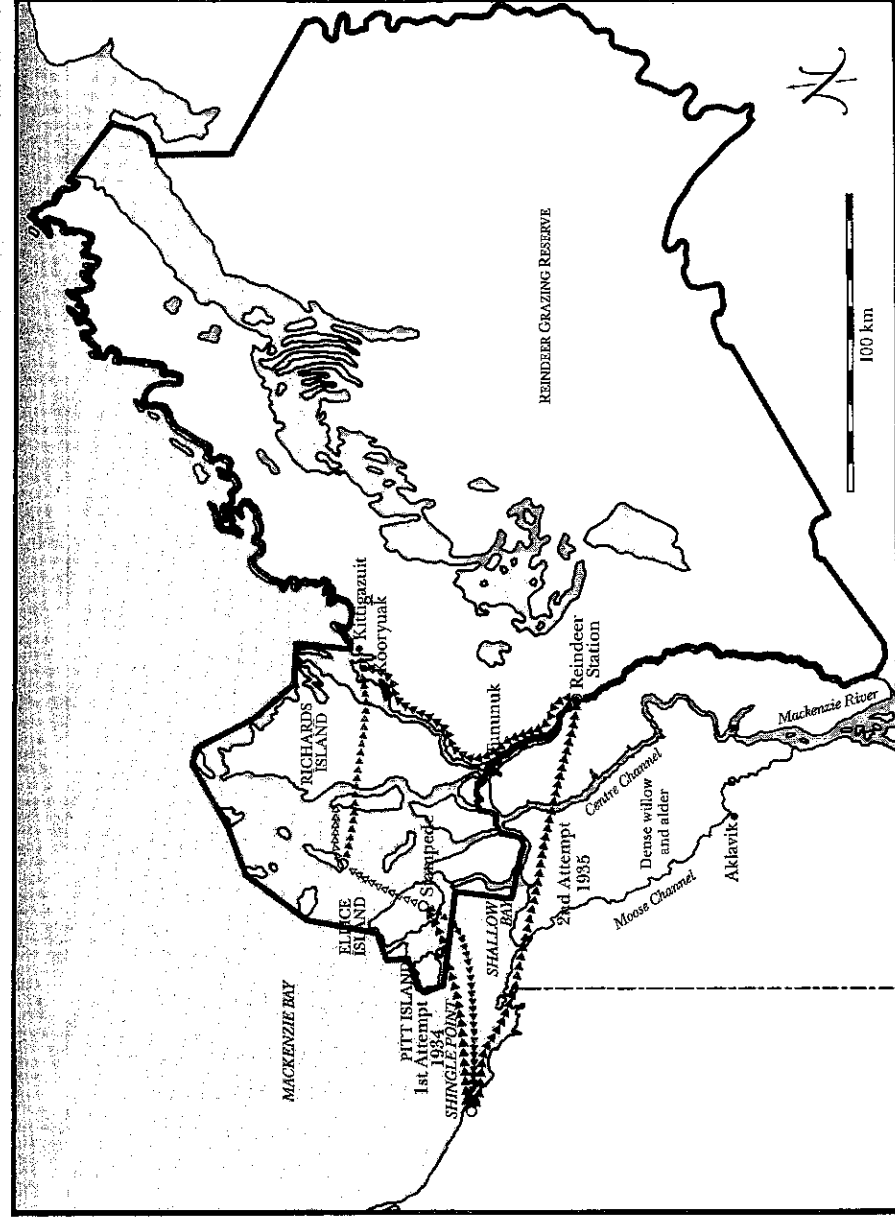
Looking back at the drawn-out row from the present perspective, it is not difficult to discern the overriding cause. It was simply prolonged frustration. The men were losing their “war” with the elements, over which they really had little or no control. After four years of tending the ornery reindeer — already two years more than had been originally estimated, the drive was still susceptible to failure.

Scapegoats are usually sought out when battles are lost. Charges are made and change invoked. A correct formula has to be found to tip the scales in

favour of winning through. To do anything to effect a change is better than to do nothing, even if innocent victims get hurt in the process. The Wood brothers were a casualty of this train of thought.

Crowley, as a result of his conversations with Bahr, saw no reason to dismiss him, and retained the trail boss as the titular head of the drive.





CROSSING THE MACKENZIE DELTA

## *The Fifth Year*

### CHAPTER 13

## Defeat at Manixa's

Dan Crowley gave an amusing assessment of Bahr's hospitality when he moved in with the old Lapp at Kay Point in August, 1933. He recorded the miserly way in which Bahr parcelled out grub, and in doing so, gave some insight into the reasons the Lapps complained about the food.<sup>1</sup>

The evening Dan arrived, Andrew asked him if he would like a cup of tea. Having travelled all day, Dan agreed it was a good idea. Bahr proceeded to brew some tea and asked Dan if he would like a biscuit.

Crowley nodded.

Bahr said he would get some, and walked out of the tent. In a minute he came back with several.

Crowley looked around for the butter. Noticing this, Bahr asked him if he wanted some. Once more, Crowley nodded.

Bahr got up again, went to the supply tent and brought back a can. He sat down, then looked around the table, and asked Dan if he wanted any milk in his tea, to which his guest replied in the affirmative. Bahr went through the same rigmarole in retrieving the milk. The sugar, perhaps due to "oversight", was already on the table.

Once Crowley settled in with the herders, he was more than satisfied with the work ethic of all of them. He complimented the Inuits as well as the three Lapps on their industriousness.

Andrew Bahr's summer plan was to graze the herd on the Kay peninsula before pointing it east for the home stretch. Crowley's first day at Kay Point was spent in walking the range and observing the deer. Though widely scattered on the neck of land, the reindeer he did view looked fit.

A few days later, Bahr commenced moving the herd southeast. The deer travelled well, and in a short time the herd had ensconced itself on the upper Kogaruk River. The food was plentiful so Bahr held the herd here through the fall rutting season. Then he would push the animals to Shoalwater Bay east of Shingle Point. The final dash across Mackenzie Bay was to be made from this area.

The Kogaruk was one of their better camps. Situated among some big willows and alders, it was well protected from wind and storms.

The herders grew optimistic as a spell of good weather eased many difficult chores such as the

hunt for game, the search for firewood, and keeping watch on the herd. This complacency spilled over into their plans for the future because they had grown so certain they would get through this time. Bahr would return to Seattle, Crowley to California, Mark Noksana and Terrence Driggs to Beechey Point or possibly Aklavik, and Edwin Allen was undecided whether to settle down in Canada or to return to Kobuk village in Alaska. Mathis Hatta, Aslak Tornensis, and Mikkel Pulk were of mixed emotions whether they would stay in Canada or return to Norway. They would make that decision when they renegotiated their contract. Crowley was so sure everything would go all right that he mailed a letter to Ralph Lomen in Seattle asking him to have his suit cleaned and ready for his arrival.

Bahr planned to nudge the herd towards Shingle Point beginning on December 8, but the day before, the weather suddenly turned for the worse. A series of blizzards blew up like a heavy surf to engulf the drainage in a white hell. The blow lasted for eighteen rime-encrusted days, and that is how long it took for the herd to be driven a distance of just twenty miles. During this colossal gale, Crowley saw what to him was one of the most incredible survival episodes he encountered during thirty years in the Arctic. Hatta and Driggs left camp one evening to tend the herd. They did not have dogs with them because they were already engaged in the field. The men by now were camped two miles distant from a tributary up which the herd was pastured. The two

men managed to make it to the valley of the creek, then proceeded up stream toward the herd. The peak of the storm struck them half way to their destination, and they became separated. Hatta crawled in among some willows to nestle under his huge parka until the storm blew out. Terrence Driggs, who was wearing a lighter version of outside clothing, decided on another strategy. He was so confident of his sense of smell, he reversed direction on the river trusting that he would be able to pick up the scent of smoke from the camp and find his way to it.

Terrence was drawing on uncounted milleniums of Arctic know-how that had been passed down to him. The Elooktoona (his Inuit name) family was one of nine in northwest Alaska that were outstanding from the standpoint of wealth and leadership among the Inuit people. the *oomalik* (leader) came from these families. The *oomaliks* played an important role in inter-village diplomacy, and also in distributing wealth through trading alliances. Terrence's family was one of the first entrusted with a reindeer herd by Sheldon Jackson in keeping with their being the "most articulate and cross-culturally capable among the Inuit people."<sup>2</sup>

Driggs worked his way slowly downriver. For all intents and purposes, the young Inuit was rendered blind by the density of the storm. He tested the air like a wolf as he plodded through the vicious, blinding maelstrom. Finally, he detected the odour of smoke, and angled off the river in that

direction. Now, however, he was in the utmost danger as compared to when he was on the river where its banks served as a guidon for him. The emission of smoke wavered in its intensity. This forced Driggs to weave his way as he endeavoured to pick up the scent. He proceeded, step by step, until he found Crowley's tent. His sudden appearance rendered Dan speechless with awe. Dan brewed some hot tea for Terrence while the wind roared outside. The velocity of the blow was so devastating that Crowley and Driggs spent the rest of the night holding on to the tent poles in order to keep the canvas from blowing away. Hatta came in the next day, none the worse for his adventure.

The weather cleared up briefly on Christmas Day. That meant the herdsman were now obliged to bring in the deer that had been scattered by the storm. To do this, they first had to travel on skis over the low hills of that area to lasso sled deer. The task was not an easy one as the temperature had dropped to forty below zero. Preparing the sled deer took an entire day.

The next morning, the sled deer were hitched up and driven out to bring in the rest of the animals. It took another three days to round up the herd before the drive recommenced its relentless walk to the east.

New Year's Eve, the trail drive reached Manixa's. This was no more than a deserted sod house situated on Shoalwater Bay about fifteen miles east of Shingle Point. The shack was broken down with a

hole in the roof, a dilapidated door, and walls of logs stacked like a picket fence with much of the chinking blown out.

Manixa<sup>3</sup> was an Inuit elder who had been recommended to Bahr as a guide for crossing Mackenzie Bay. However, he had abandoned his cabin a year earlier to search out more productive hunting grounds farther east. Bahr, Pulk, and Crowley moved into the cabin and did their best to plug up the gaps in the drafty shelter. This was a futile effort in the depths of night, and their only alternative was to immediately crawl into their sleeping bags to stave off the piercing cold. Even with a fire, they were uncomfortable. Crowley sorely regretted the fact that he had not brought along a toddy to celebrate the arrival of 1934.

Dawn came up the next day like a dying ember at an abandoned campfire. It would be another month before the sun would even reach the earth's rim to cast direct light. In the refracted glow of the invisible orb, the expanse of Mackenzie Bay stretched dimly in the infinite Arctic night. Somehow, the herdsman would have to push the recalcitrant deer across a twenty-mile stretch of sheer ice to reach the first island. Sixty more miles would then have to be traversed through a labyrinth of isles before they gained the reindeer corrals at Kittigazuit.

A small hitch developed in their plans when Crowley announced that he would not be going across the ice with the herd because he did not

possess adequate clothing. Incredible as it may seem, when Crowley had arrived at the camp four months before, he had not bothered to obtain heavy over-garments of fur pants and a heavy parka. Why he neglected to purchase proper gear at one of the trading posts is an enigma. Because of this oversight, Crowley elected to journey directly to the reindeer station, and there await the herd's arrival. He hired a dog team and went to Kittigazuit by way of Aklavik, and to a new, permanent complex built at the tree line sixty miles up the Mackenzie from the original camp. He picked up Erling Porsild at the latter station and the two men proceeded to the old location, where they spent two days repairing and adding panels to the corral. After completing those chores, they holed-up in a cabin, and waited for the arrival of the herd.

Back at Manixa's, Bahr made ready for the dash across the bay. *Manixa's*: a place to inspire the imagination, arising out of the vast untold, unrecorded events of time to capture its tiny space in history, like the O.K. corral, or the Plains of Abraham. Manixa's, the jumping-off point for Bahr's herd, now beginning its fifth year of the most enduring trail drive in the history of North America, and during which the old Lapp had well earned that suitable nickname, "The Arctic Moses". Manixa's, cold and desolate; windswept and lonely; yet prodding the imagination. What ghosts

haunted this place? What twist of fate caused men from half way around the world to congregate here while tending two thousand reindeer that had been so long on the trail?

On New Year's day the men hunkered down to rest, and await good weather. Bahr celebrated his fifth New Year's day with the herd. During that time the world had been shaken by financial panic and controversy. May 1931 witnessed the failure of the Austrian Credit-Anstalt which advanced the economic crunch with inevitable bankruptcies that followed. Japan had invaded China's province of Manchuria, in a precursory move of the Pacific war. Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany by Hindenburg in 1933, initiating his rise to power.

North America had seen its share of changes. Mackenzie King was replaced by the Conservative, R. B. Bennett, in 1930 in Canada. Franklin Roosevelt won the presidency for the Democrats in the United States in 1933, and prohibition was repealed in America. Now, at least, Crowley would be able to obtain a legal drink when he returned to Seattle.

January 3, 1934 dawned clear with a three-quarter moon bathing the sunless Arctic sky in its eerie bluish light. Moonbeams played off the snow-covered ice of Mackenzie Bay, providing a surprising radiance to the route the herd was supposed to follow. The mercury read forty below zero. There was no wind to disturb the preternatural silence. At this time of the year, the does were not yet heavy

with young, and could be expected to proceed without difficulty.

The sled deer were led out onto the ice and stationed at the head of the herd. Moving to their front were Bahr, and Oliver, an Inuit elder hired as a guide by Crowley for the push across the bay. Oliver supposedly knew the route that threaded through the islands to the mouth of the Mackenzie River and the destination at Kittigazuit. The regular crew followed, scattered at appropriate intervals: Hatta, Pulk, and Tornensis: the three Inuits, Driggs, Allen, and Noksana; and an unidentified student from the Shingle Point mission who had been added to help out on the crossing.

Men and dogs were posted at points around the herd that might be vulnerable to a stampede. The men stuffed their pockets with biscuits, dry meat, *muk-tuk*, and any other food that was easily portable, each with his favourite snack. This was it! A tension rippled through the ranks of the herders that was not unlike the strain felt by soldiers going into combat. If the animals faltered on this sortie, it could mean another whole year's delay for the drovers. At worst, the herd might be scattered so far and wide as to be unrecoverable, a complete loss.

Finally, Bahr waved his troops forward, forming a line that stretched for almost a mile. Footing at first was good on the snow-covered ice, and the herd moved easily, without the accordion-like undulations that characterize a herd when part of it bunches up while the other parts stretch out. The warm

breath of over two thousand reindeer created a cloud of fog which, under the wan light of the moon, took on its own cerulean glow. The shadowy silhouettes moved like phantoms, now on the ice, and now seemingly suspended above the snowy surface, as if they were no more than a polar mirage that might vanish at the blink of an eye. Adding to the spectral essence of the scene was the winking of the flashlights of the drovers as they signalled messages to each other across the ice. The tiny dots and dashes along the periphery of the herd looked like a bevy of fireflies one sees on a hot summer night in more temperate climates.

Reality was imparted to this polar phantasmagoria by the sudden burst of sounds as the weird parade ventured out onto the frozen bay. Dogs sprang into action, barking; men shouted orders; and the reindeer grunted their protests against the forced march . . . *ogh, ogh, ogh* . . . while the sibilant hiss of expanding and contracting ice under the crunch of thousands of footsteps in the snow reminded one that the spectacle was real.

Progress was satisfactory for the first five hours of the drive, but at that point the deer began to encounter patches of ice swept bare and polished to a glaze by the storm winds of the preceding weeks. A reindeer's hooves, though proportionately large and specialized for navigating swamps in the summer and snow in winter, are not suited for crossing glare ice because they contract, giving them no traction. Realizing the animals would not

venture onto these patches of ice, Bahr instructed Oliver to plan detours around them. In fulfilling this need, a crazy zig-zag path had to be followed from one patch of snow to the next, which doubled the distance the herd was forced to travel. The animals were overly tired by the time they reached a small island, the first isle some fifteen hours into the drive. The forage was poor, but there was enough food to keep the deer manageable.

Bahr let the herders and the animals rest for two hours before giving the order to move on. At the same time, he instructed Oliver to avoid willow clumps in which the deer might become entangled and unruly. Thirty hours into the journey, the tired herd struggled onto yet another island. Bahr hoped this outcrop would carry enough food to sustain the herd. There was plenty of grass, but it was dried out and virtually of no nutritional value. The deer roamed about, seemingly satisfied with what there was and commenced to graze.

The men were tuckered out after having plodded through the raw, bone-chilling cold while the planet whirled one complete turn on its axis. Their clothes were soaked with sweat, and stuck clam-like to their skin from the tremendous physical effort. The wet clothes fostered a chilling effect on the men, and when the temperature dropped another ten degrees to fifty below zero, their condition assumed critical proportions. One of the Lapps who was wearing unsuitable mittens froze his hands. As a result, he could not feed himself or even

hold a cup of tea without help. Another Lapp suffered a badly sprained back when a sled deer lurched, knocking him over.

The accidents and the run-down condition of the herders forced Bahr to call a halt. He chanced putting up a tent because he had no choice if the men were to get warmed up: half a hundred degrees below zero was nothing to fool with. If they did not dry out their clothes and take on food and liquid, their metabolic reservoir would be drained dry and they would begin to freeze. They built a fire in their small rectangular stove, and crammed it full of willow sticks. That was enough to warm them up. They drank hot tea, and brewed chunks of stew that had been frozen before they started.

Bahr wanted someone to watch the herd, but the men, including Bahr himself, were so thoroughly exhausted, he entrusted the fate of the herd to luck. Indeed, the deer seemed to be contented, browsing quietly.

It was then that the mischievous boreal gods played their trump card. A southwest wind sprang up. It was not intense initially, but the scent of their own passage and the lure of feed on the distant mainland that lay behind them caused the panic-prone deer to turn and head en masse into the wind and back the way they had come.

Bahr and his men had been resting for two hours when one man went out to check the herd to see what sort of condition it was in. He arrived in time to see the last few rumps disappear into the rising

storm. The nightmare of drovers from time immemorial had come to pass: two thousand deer and more, fractious from the long drive and too little food, had bolted for the mainland. Bahr sent the four Inuits racing after the irrational creatures to turn them around while the Lapps remained, holding one hundred of the herd that had not bolted, as well as thirteen sled deer.

The Inuit herders did their best to catch up, but patches of glare ice that diverted the animals on the way across served the same purpose on the way back. Without the constraining herders, the deer scattered in all directions. The storm kept building in intensity until it became what the natives called an *agnik*: a full-fledged blizzard. Noksana, Driggs, and Allen now had to worry more about saving themselves than the deer. If they became disoriented on the ice and missed the island, they could easily freeze to death. Helped by the dependable noses of their dogs, one by one the four men eventually drifted into Bahr's camp up to four hours later.

In the meantime, Bahr had consigned to the Lapps the task of driving the 100 reindeer that had not run off twenty miles to Richards Island. He figured if he could get the animals to that island, which had plenty of desirable forage, they would stay there. The storm, by now, had evolved into an Arctic hurricane. The Lapps, handicapped by their injuries, lost track of the small herd in the maelstrom, but kept going toward Richards Island,



which they reached safely with the thirteen sled deer.

After the Inuits had rested, they decided, the next morning, to head for Shingle Point, looking for deer as they proceeded across the ice. Their hike proved to be yet another severe test of endurance because they had to walk into the teeth of the continuing gale, which took its toll. Terrence Driggs froze toes on both feet, and all of the men suffered frostbitten cheeks. They reached Shingle Point safely, but Bahr and Oliver, who were expected to follow them, did not arrive. A day passed, and another, and then three. The people of Shingle Point began to worry about the fate of the two men. To be footloose that long on the Arctic Ocean in a howling blizzard was to defy fate.

Back at the original camp, Oliver had told Bahr there were people living on Kendall Island, from whom they could get supplies. Bahr suggested Oliver take the dog team and go there, but the elderly man did not want to travel alone. The trail boss agreed to go with him and they set out in the storm. The team moved slowly as the dogs were already tired from continuous travel with little rest. Oliver estimated they would reach the island in four hours.

Bahr and Oliver almost expired from the combination of cold and wind as they made their way toward the sanctuary which was situated on the far northern fringe of the Mackenzie delta. Bahr parodied his own intense discomfort in a letter: "I

shiver, one could hear my teeth one hundred feet from me."<sup>4</sup>

After travelling for twenty-four hours, they came upon a substantial-looking shelter, virtually a house rather than a cabin. The two men staggered into the refuge, more dead than alive. There was no one around, but plenty of wood was available. They built a fire in the stove and in a short time were comfortably warm. Bahr commented: "Strip off our ice and wet clothes and turn all our dogs loose. Fed them good on fish and hung up all our clothes to dry and afterward got to bed."

They remained in the house four days while they waited for the storm to abate. During this time the residents, Denis Araktok and Joe Illisiak, returned. Since the welcome mat was always out among Inuit, the owners were hospitable to the visitors and sold Bahr whatever supplies they could spare. In addition, one of their dog teams was hired by Bahr to help haul supplies to their island camp site. From there, it took two night camps before Bahr and Oliver made it back to Shingle Point and their mates. The people of the mission were much relieved to see them.

In the next few days, as the men recovered from the ordeal of the crossing, the harsh realization began to sink in, that the Arctic winds seemed to have snatched victory from them while they were almost in sight of their destination. From force of habit they began to prepare to go again in search of the deer, hardly taking time to ask whether or not

there were any left to bring in. Several small bands that had been seen, disoriented and heading out to sea, were later unaccounted for, and presumed to have been lost. Others were met by wolves as they came off the ice, and, if not killed on the spot, were chased into the Richardson Mountains where they disappeared.

Luckily, most of the herd was found intact along the banks of the Blow River only a few miles east from where the last stage of the drive had begun.

The drovers found good feed for the deer farther east along Moose Channel of the Mackenzie and pastured them there. Then, during the next few weeks the herders travelled far and wide, bringing in strays. By the time they were satisfied they had collected all the deer within a reasonable distance, the animals were too run-down to attempt the crossing again before the spring thaw. And then it would be too late until summer and fall had passed and winter had returned again. Several days of an evil wind had just added another year to the drive. To a man, the drovers cursed the Arctic, blasphemed the winds, and rued the day they had ever set out on such an expedition.

Dan Crowley, in a letter to Ralph Lomen explaining the setback, blamed Bahr's lack of organizational ability as the principal cause for the disaster. He vowed it would not happen again. Dan swore that the next time the route would be carefully mapped

and staked out in advance, with food caches placed at strategic locations along the way, and lichen picked, bagged, and towed on sleds to make sure the deer had enough food.

Crowley conceded that the drive would have to be deferred to next winter, and since the herd was down to around fourteen hundred deer, all they could hope for was a good fawn crop in April and May of this year, 1934, to bring the numbers back to where they had been before the stampede.

Andrew Bahr suspected he was being made the scapegoat of the disaster by Crowley, and did his best to present his own side of the story to the Lomens in a letter dispatched on March 18, 1934. He had warned Crowley in a not unfriendly debate that the drive across Mackenzie Bay should not have been attempted before February or March because of the short days and the likelihood that the ice would have been swept clear of snow. No one had supported him in this except the Lapp, Aslak Tornensis. Bahr wrote: "I was alone, such fool." The trail boss had, in fact, added an ominous note in his argument against crossing the ice in the cold months of December and January, when he said: "I told Mr. Crowley we are liable to lost whole drive and freeze ourselves dead too."<sup>5</sup>

The Lomen brothers received the discouraging news of the stampede with creditable forbearance. They were generally tolerant of the many diverse opinions that came to their eyes and ears, and were seldom critical of Bahr, Crowley, the Porsild

brothers, or other men in the field. When they wanted something done, they usually expressed their wishes in the form of a suggestion, not a dictate. Their own years in the field furnished them with a knowledgeable empathy for the herders and their difficulties. However, the Lomens were having their own share of troubles which seemed to multiply in the face of the misfortunes of the drive.

The adage that adversity breeds adversity as success does success, though of questionable logic, surely held true for the Lomens in the aftermath of the defeat at Mackenzie Bay.

The retreat in disarray to the mainland served to focus worrisome eyes on the drive. The Canadian government decided it would be in its own best interest to review its contract with the Lomen corporation and postulate on its terms, if by chance the venture failed and the Lomens defaulted. Government attorneys were called in to prepare a legal brief that would cover all eventualities as well as answer several specific questions about the drive, one being the consequences if the Lomen company simply abandoned the herd. Hume wondered whether the government should assume proportional responsibility, since it had already advanced payment to the Lomen company.

Attorneys, after carefully examining the uncomplicated document, advised Hume that they should, and gave an example. If the government did have to take over the herd, and the Lomens were due any funds after the remaining deer were

rounded up and counted, they would be entitled to the balance, less expenses incurred. The reverse would hold true if the reindeer count was under the equivalent sum already advanced to the Lomen corporation.

It was obvious that the Lomens had taken a tremendous loss as the result of the failure at Mackenzie Bay. The dollar value of the six hundred lost deer amounted to thirty-nine thousand dollars. In view of this, and based on a plan advanced by Crowley, the Lomens asked the Canadian government if they could fill out the depleted herd with deer purchased from Inuit along the coast.

This request was forwarded to Erling Porsild, who had travelled to Ottawa to confer with Hume about the ill fortune of the reindeer drive. Erling's previous trip along the coast now served him well because he had taken measurements of the deer and found them to be considerably undersized as compared to the Tunguse strain making up the reindeer of the drive. He advised the government to turn down the Lomen request. They accepted the refusal without argument. They could do nothing about it anyway, and there were still suspicions among the coastal Inuit (sometimes fomented pharisaically by the mission teachers) that the Lomens would cheat native herders if given the chance. Other Inuit ranchers worried that if the Lomen herders tried to round up strays, they would, wittingly or not, sweep up many non-Lomen deer in the process. As it turned out, only thirteen

deer eventually delivered at the Mackenzie displayed another owner's ear marks, a remarkably low level of "contamination" after a five-year trail drive.

Other problems beset the Lomens as 1934 progressed, including a fire which destroyed a couple of city blocks in downtown Nome. Almost everything the Lomens owned went up in the conflagration, including their stores, offices, and the home of one of the brothers. As a consequence, they were slow in paying some of the vouchers that had accrued with Hudson's Bay and other companies along the coast. This served to add to the growing concern over whether the company would hold together long enough to complete the drive and pay the outstanding bills.

The fact that hearings on the industry were being held in Washington, D. C., where Carl Lomen was spending more and more time, was another needle in the side of the operation. This, too, worried the Canadian government which requested its embassy in Washington to ascertain the status of the reindeer industry in Alaska. Lyman S. Brewster, overseer of the industry for the United States government in the Alaska territory, was pessimistic about the future. The industry was in a state of decline, with meat costing now six cents a pound to produce, and only four cents a pound being paid on the dock in Seattle. He said the Depression had taken the floor out of the market, and with beef selling at rock bottom prices, cattlemen were in no

mood to be receptive to a competitor. He surmised that the ultimate result would be a buy-out of all private holdings of deer by the United States government with the idea of preserving "the industry solely as a source of supply of food and clothing for the exclusive use of the Eskimos and natives of Alaska."<sup>6</sup> Or, as the Canadian report summed it up, the reindeer meat operations in Alaska for purposes of export looked to be on the verge of collapse.

This report could not have done anything but make Canada's Interior Department wonder if they had purchased a huge "pig in a poke". The original basis for Canadian optimism had been the two decades of success of the reindeer industry in Alaska. If there was no market in which to sell the animal products, the purpose for which the industry was being built, that of earning income for the Eskimos, would be destroyed. The Canadians faced the burden of endless subsidies that would be needed to maintain the herd they had purchased, once it was delivered. The reindeer would, of course, provide a steady source of food for the native people, and prevent the endemic bouts of starvation, which was also part of the original intent, but the project was starting to look like a boondoggle. Nonetheless, whether a "pig in a poke" or not, the Canadian government was committed to receiving the deer.

## CHAPTER 14

## The Final Crossing

Andrew Bahr let the animals gain strength on the Moose Channel pasturage east of the Blow River through the spring of 1934. Moderate weather prevailed when the fawn crop came in. With almost all of the does delivering a fawn, and most of them surviving because of the good weather, one thousand deer were added to the herd.

Bahr then shifted the reindeer to Kay Point as he had done the year before. He found the feed to be bountiful there, and the snow soft. Contrary to more harsh years, it was easy for the deer to dig down to get forage.

The animals thrived, and in a rough count, numbered about twenty-four hundred head. This placed the Lomens into a cash receiving position (relative to the partial payments made so far) rather

than a reimbursement situation, when and if the reindeer were successfully delivered.

Crowley, who had rejoined the herd after the debacle of the crossing, though appreciative of the fine crop of fawns, was plainly disturbed by one detrimental aspect of the good weather that summer, this being the fog that swept in from the Arctic Ocean. Warmth translated into fog when the rays of the summer sun warmed up the cold water of the polar sea. The mist swirled in over the coastline to envelop the land in its gray shroud, rendering the drovers blind to the stealthy approaches of the ever-persistent wolves.

Constant watch and continual alertness managed to keep losses from wolves relatively light but the nuisance of their raids proved tiring to the drovers who had to plod over the soggy muskeg to round up the herd after each sortie. Their energy was sapped and their alertness less keen. In one instance, Aslak Tornensis thought he saw a wolf among the herd and snapped off a shot in the misty light, killing the animal. When he walked up to examine the dead predator it turned out to be Red, one of the herd dogs.

Dan Crowley put in part of the summer at Herschel Island, waiting on the arrival of Captain Pedersen and his schooner, the *Patterson*. Planning the logistics for next winter's crossing, he purchased seven months of supplies which he calculated would last the herders through March 1935. (Captain Pedersen's opinion was that a crossing

should not be attempted before February, thus supporting Bahr's earlier arguments.) Beyond that date Dan made no plans, because to him such an eventuality was too untenable to face. If they failed to reach the corrals through that springtime "window", it was highly doubtful that the drive would continue. The Lomens themselves had mentioned this possibility to their backer, Arthur Baldwin. Even now, serious consideration was being given to some sort of cash settlement with the Canadian government, whereby the reindeer would be turned over to the Canadians on the west side of the Mackenzie delta.

The Canadian government worried about this eventuality also, and authorized Erling Porsild to investigate various ways of moving the deer to Kittigazuit. One option was to herd the animals onto a barge and float them in several relays across the bay. Porsild estimated that as many as one thousand deer could be moved at one time by barge. This idea, however, was never extensively pursued because of the logistical problems involved. Barges were in demand for other activities, and even if one was obtained, there was always the chance ice floes could prevent its use, or capsize it.

Erling also, of course, re-evaluated the possibility of driving the herd across the bay as Bahr had attempted. He deemed it practical if enough help could be mustered to control the reindeer during the crossing.

The Lapps' contract expired on July 19, while

they were in the field with the herd at Kay Point. Tornensis, Pulk, and Hatta opted to leave Bahr's camp — albeit this time with due notice — and return to Kittigazuit, their purpose being to amend the provisions of the contract that did not apply because they were not at the reindeer station, and then return.

Crowley exhibited some concern when the Lapps had not returned after a month's absence: "I do not see how the Canadian government can afford to leave them go at this time. It would be quite a blow to us if they do not return, as they are good reindeer men and can not be replaced. However, if we have to we can get along without them."<sup>1</sup>

Kay Point was a good spot. The breezes from the Arctic Ocean furnished welcome relief from mosquitoes throughout the summer. Alternatives to the menu of the herders were provided by a large population of wild fowl that nested in the vicinity. Occasionally they would obtain bigger game. Edwin Allen and Mark Noksana, while returning from King Point with a boat for transferring supplies and gear, shot two caribou, which were a welcome change to canned products.

The first snows fell in mid-August, and in sufficient depth to stick on the distant foothills. A warm spell melted off most of the white mantle along the shore line, but this thaw abruptly came to an end on September 16, when the polar ice pack moved in overnight to cover the sea from horizon to horizon. Two days later the small bay on

which the drovers were camped froze thick enough for them to load up their sleds and shift the camp across its one-mile expanse to set up operations on the far shore. Snow blew in, covered the ground, and stuck! It looked like winter had descended on the herd once more.

The fickle Arctic had yet another trick to play — but this one was in the drive's favour. A few days after the second freeze up, a chinook engulfed the bay and the camp, thawing the snow and blowing the floe ice out to sea. The mild weather held, and as a result, provided ideal conditions for the fall rut which extended from late August to October. With the herd docile and well fed, it insured an excellent fawn crop the following spring.

Bahr, Crowley, and the others were still anxiously awaiting the Lapps' return. Meanwhile, at the reindeer station, Erling Porsild was driving a hard bargain in negotiating the new contract desired by the Lapps. He admitted their demands were not unreasonable in view of the conditions under which they had lived over the preceding years, but refused to put their pay on a par with the one-hundred-dollar-a-month salary of the Alaskan Inuits.

Though satisfied with the work of Mikkel Pulk and Aslak Tornensis, Porsild was not fully satisfied with Mathis Hatta, blaming him for much of the trouble and dissatisfaction among his co-workers, and hinted that he should resign. Porsild's observation indirectly supported the Wood brothers' complaints earlier about their relations with the Lapp

contingent from Canada; Hatta may have been the culprit about whom they were griping. Hatta's influence, no matter what his faults, resulted in Porsild's grudging acquiescence to a raise in the Lapps' base pay from forty to sixty dollars a month, plus free schooling for their children in Aklavik, and the Lapps rejoined the reindeer drive in December 1934.

The dialogue continued between Crowley and Bahr with respect to the strategy they would employ to cross Mackenzie Bay. Crowley wanted to place two relief camps along the route. Fresh herders would await the drive at each camp and replace drovers from the preceding phase. Dan also insisted that deer moss collected on the mainland be stored at each camp and fed to the deer in the course of the drive. In addition, Dan wanted to gamble on taking a route closer inshore rather than to point the herd far out onto the open ice of Mackenzie Bay.

Bahr, on the other hand, saw such precautions as a waste of time and money. Said Bahr: "I tell him that is all unnecessary and waste expense. We don't need no stake trails and no stations but we need proper season for crossing. That's all we need and we should not bother the herd . . . but hold the herd in the best feeding grounds until February and then go across without any fuss in safety."<sup>2</sup>

Dan Crowley was amazed that Bahr could be so phlegmatic about the crossing, especially after having already failed twice in striving to achieve it. In

Dan's opinion, the previous failures were due to one fact only: poor organization, particularly with reference to the failed attempt of the year before. The drive was lost when the men took a break and left the herd — it was as simple as that.

Bahr, at first, was adamantly against their trying to cross Mackenzie Bay in November or December, though he slowly acceded to Crowley's wishes as his superior. But Crowley, too, would have lessons to learn about the vagaries of the Arctic weather.

Late in November the drive moved eastward again toward Manixa's in anticipation of the dash across the bay to the east side of the delta. Initially, climatic conditions were perfect: the bay froze over, and simultaneously snow came down to deposit the necessary footing for the deer. Then the weather turned clear; the moon was due full at the proper time, and with the clear sky would provide maximum light. In the three years Bahr and his men had been trying to move the deer across the bay, the elements had never been so generous. If there was ever a time to go, this was it.

Ironically, Crowley and Bahr found themselves again at Manixa's on New Year's Eve. Once more they were bivouacked in the broken-down dwelling with the hole in the roof and the driftwood walls. Now, instead of three men being crammed into the cabin at the break of the new year, there were four, in addition to six dogs! Shepherd dogs, the prima

donnas of the drive, rated quarters right along with their masters, while the Inuit members of the crew took bunks with relatives at Shingle Point.

Crowley's memory did not have to be acute to recall the previous New Year at Manixa's when the mercury fell so low it bottomed out and was indistinguishable on the thermometer. Now they were more comfortable, and this time Dan had taken the precaution to have liquor in his possession. The birth of 1935 would be celebrated in style.

"I'll never forget last year," Crowley wrote, "as the wind came through the chinks in the logs . . . three of us so sick with cold we should have been in bed, and not a drop of *medicine* in camp."<sup>3</sup>

If anyone had forgotten the shack after the first New Year's spent there, he certainly would not forget the second. Though more comfortable this year from a physical standpoint, the herders were far from being at ease. The tedium of the drive was getting to them. Probably the worst part about their situation was they were so near to their destination in distance, but still so far in terms of the major, critical task still to be done.

Mother nature became fickle: an eight-day thaw set in, melting all of the snow with the exception of deep drifts, and leaving the ice of the bay barren. The weather held clear with little or no wind. These were excellent conditions, but not for their task. Without snow to give traction, the reindeer could not be budged from the shore.

How many reindeer drives had ever arrived at the



Mackenzie delta in December hoping for snow as footing to cross the bay; and how often had there ever been a thaw at that time of year to take it away?

Each morning Crowley stood looking dumbly at the glare ice of the bay, irked by the fact that he could do nothing about it. In frustration, he wrote: "It would be just my luck to run into such a d — — winter as this. In memory of the oldest inhabitant, they have never had anything like it before."

Mikkel Pulk voiced the frustrations of all of them when he wrote: "We cannot help getting tired waiting for the reindeer to get across the river. The time seems to drag terribly, and it does not look like we will get across this year either."<sup>4</sup>

Crowley, thoroughly depressed by the unfathomable thaw and contrary elements at that time, was a master of understatement in his diary. "I will have to admit that this country, and the conditions under which I have been living, are beginning to get my goat."<sup>5</sup>

The Lapps were anxious to get home and the Inuits, too, had had enough. Grippe almost incapacitated Bahr, as he suffered from excruciating headaches and a cough. Even Erling Porsild complained back at the reindeer station: "I have suffered more this winter from rheumatism or lumbago than in any previous winter."

There seemed to be an unspoken agreement among all of Lomen's crew that if the crossing was not successful this time around, the drive would end at Manixa's as far as they were concerned.

Possibly the Lomens would hire another crew, but their financial prospects were as gloomy as the mood of the men on the drive. As a fall-back position, the company was soliciting producers of dog food to see if they would purchase thousands of pounds of first-class reindeer meat they could not sell. In a letter to Dan, Ralph reported that four of the leading dog food brands in the United States did an aggregate business of forty million dollars in 1933. "All we want is a million from each of them and we will be happy."<sup>6</sup>

The date of the January full moon passed, and still no snow had fallen to cover the ice. The next full moon would not be until mid-February. The men waited. Tension continued to build and the frustrations deepened as the snowless skies persisted. Drought-ridden farmers praying for rain could not have been any more intent than the drovers wishing for snow.

Erling Porsild's anxiety continued to build at the reindeer station. He was apprehensive because he had received several offers of jobs as a botanist, and if he did not get back to Ottawa for the interviews, he might not be hired at all.

Crowley was equally impatient. He prowled the proposed route distributing sacks of lichen for the deer, and canned food for the men at selected locations along the way. He had also implanted sticks marking the route across the ice. Dan was taking no chances. If anyone among the drovers wanted to complete the drive, he did. He was over fifty, and

had been in the field for eighteen months. Plainly, it was now or never.

Finally, the break came. A foot of the white crystals fell in the last week of January. Subsequent squalls in the next several weeks added to the layer of snow that covered the ice of the bay making the depth suitable for the attempt.

On February 18, the exodus set out again from Manixa's. The line of deer filed out onto the ice gingerly, testing the footing as they plodded toward the obscure horizon. Imperceptibly, almost at the minute the deer's hooves touched the ice, a breeze sprang up. Were the trickster gods preparing yet another gigantic joke to play on the drovers? Ignoring the stiffening breeze, Bahr, Crowley, and the herdsman refused to be intimidated and pressed the deer forward.

This time they followed the edge of the delta more closely as the drive lurched into the history books. Now resting, now feeding, and then parading forward, twenty-four hundred reindeer picked their way across the ice of the bay under the gaudy lights of the aurora borealis and the illumination of a "reindeer moon". The herd successfully traversed the unsheltered stretch of Mackenzie Bay and reached Ellice Island in good condition. That night, under rotating watches of the herders, the deer were contained in a refuge provided by the steep banks of the narrow Tikdalik River. The next

morning the drive commenced again, weaving among the islands of the delta. Another night was spent on the trail, pushing the animals to the limit of their endurance. Frequent stops were made during which reindeer moss was unloaded from sleds and fed to the animals, restoring their strength.

Late on the third day Bahr called for a rest. The herd was on the ice, and in sight of Richards Island, but the trail boss realized they were just too tired to go on. In fact, they were so played out, the entire lot of them lay down on the ice. This was a phenomenon seldom witnessed by the herders.

After several hours, Bahr moved them forward again, the drovers and dogs allowing for no digressions on the part of the deer. Soon the splay-hoofed creatures sniffed the odour of lichen that grew in profusion on Richards Island, and their gait speeded up. They climbed the steep banks of the isle and began to graze contentedly as there was plenty of edible forage. They were now only thirty miles from the corrals at Kittigazuit. It was February 21, 1935. The men had lost only two deer during the crossing, making it a truly remarkable achievement by any measure.

Crowley and Bahr decided to hold the herd near the tiny settlement at Tununuk on the East Channel of the Mackenzie until the deer had gained strength and were ready to proceed on the last leg of the journey.

A week went by. The men then headed the deer to the reindeer station where they were run through

the chutes on March 6, 1935. A total of 2,370 deer were counted, with 1,498 of them being females. This figure, at sixty per cent, was a higher and more satisfactory ratio than had been expected.<sup>7</sup> Andrew Bahr and his men had won.

The drive was over, but the haggling was not. Both Porsild and Crowley were cranky after the wind-up of the trail drive. Each was loyal to his employer and did his best to represent those interests in a favourable way. Crowley wanted one hundred dollars for each of the six reindeer dogs. Porsild contended they were too old to be worth that much and offered fifty dollars.

A lone female caribou that had been with the drive for a considerable amount of time was not counted by Porsild. Crowley felt that she should have been.

Another dispute arose over the sled deer that had been turned loose on Richards Island by the Lapps during the storm of the previous year, and later caught and taken to the station. Crowley figured they were as much a part of the herd as those already passed through the chutes, and should be counted. Erling Porsild, though acknowledging the reasonableness of that request, foresaw problems if he was expected to pay for every straggler that popped up over the coming months, and turned Crowley down.

They disputed the price to be paid for the

reindeer sleds, which had been made in Seattle and were much too heavy for regular use. The bulky sleds had been a continuing source of complaints from members of the drive since the day it started. Crowley asked twenty-five dollars for each sled. Porsild countered that he could build them himself for ten dollars less.

The fears of missionaries that the Lomen herd would seriously deplete the stocks of the native reindeer ranchers along the coast of the Arctic Ocean proved to be ungrounded. The thirteen non-Lomen strays that were counted in the final tally were accepted by Porsild. Since it was adjudged that some of the uncaptured Lomen strays joined various herds that were grazed along the coast of the Arctic Ocean over the course of the drive, it probably more than balanced the difference.

Because a fawn crop of 811 was born shortly after the arrival of the herd at the reindeer corrals (for which Canada did not have to pay), the Canadian government generously readjusted Porsild's estimates and credited the Lomens with the prices Crowley had sought for the dogs and sleds, and also credited them with the sled deer strays.

Including the initial and interim payments, and the final pay-out of \$33,900, the government of Canada paid a total of \$146,400 to the Lomen company for bringing in the 2,300 deer.

Thus ended the longest-lasting trail drive in the history of North America, and, undoubtedly, the most remarkable. It had featured semi-wild animals

that most North Americans had never seen, and whose meat they had never tasted. It had taken whites and natives of four countries — Canada, the United States, Norway, and Denmark — to succeed, and had involved governments at federal, state, and territorial levels. Now the future of the northern aboriginal peoples in the delta area would be more secure.

## EPILOGUE

Shortly after the delivery of the herd and final settlement of all costs, Erling Porsild took a job with the National Museum of Canada as a specialist in his field of botany, where he spent the rest of his life. He wrote one of the definitive books on Arctic plant life, and won many awards for his work.

Andrew Bahr returned to his home in Seattle where festivities held for him by the city included an "Andy Bahr Day". However, all of the news was not good. He lost his two apartment houses for non-payment on his loans, but salvaged enough to live in comfort until his death ten years later. When asked how he felt about the loss of his investments, Bahr shrugged and explained that it mattered little as compared to the fact that he had obtained papers and was a United States citizen. For Andrew Bahr, that counted more than anything.

The Lomen brothers' great dream was shattered in 1937 when the United States government took over the reindeer industry in Alaska. From that time on, no white man, not even Lapps, could own a

female reindeer. The Lomens' contention that private enterprise was crucial to the industry for establishing markets proved at least partially correct as the entire industry collapsed shortly after they were forced out of it. Twenty years later, the number of deer had dwindled from three-quarters of a million head to several thousand. The reindeer industry did not win its way back to prominence in Alaska until the 1980s, when it regained lost importance and now, with over fifty thousand animals, supplies the needs of that area's expanded population.

In Canada, after a slow start, general indifference on the part of government and disinterest by natives, the herd was turned over to private enterprise where it has thrived and grown into a million-dollar industry under the management of a native Inuit, William Nasogaluak. His own private herd numbered approximately eight thousand deer in 1987.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the vision of the pioneers of the region has been partially fulfilled. The work of the men who persevered for over five years on the trail was not in vain.

#### EPILOGUE (p.263)

1. Nasogaluak's financial advisor and business manager, Douglas Billingsley, also worked in the same capacity for the first private owner, Silas Kanagegana, who purchased the herd in 1974. They formed Canadian Reindeer Ltd., under which the reindeer business still operates. Billingsley advised the author in an interview that the herd is currently (1989) up for sale. The Inuvialuit Corporation of that region has displayed some interest in purchasing it with the idea of transplanting the deer to various settlements in the Canadian Arctic. More recently, the Binder family, relatives of Mikkel Pulk, have purchased the herd and maintain headquarters at Toktoyuktuk in Canada's Northwest Territory.

## ENDNOTES

### CHAPTER 1 (p.1)

1. See *Overland to Starvation Cove* by Heinrich Klutschak, trans. and edited by William Barr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
2. The Commission members included chairman John Gunion Rutherford of the Canadian Board of Railway Commissioners; James Stanley McLean, Harris Abattoir Company (later Canada Packers); James B. Harkin, Commissioner of Dominion Parks, and Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Explorer.
3. *Book of the Eskimos*, Peter Freuchen (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1961).
4. Nuligak, an Inuit who published his autobiography, *I, Nuligak* in 1966, described one of these hunts in which they used kayaks almost the way a cowboy used horses, to drive belugas up onto sandbars. Once the whales had beached themselves in the shallow water, they were harpooned. Nuligak recalls that on one hunt, three hundred and fifty whales were taken.
5. Testimony, April 29, 1925.

### CHAPTER 2 (p.18)

1. Brooklyn *Daily Times*, March 20, 1926.
2. Letter, Finnie to Leonard Baldwin, Aug. 22, 1925.
3. Letter, Erling Porsild to O. S. Finnie, Dec. 12, 1926.
4. Porsild to Finnie, July 13, 1927.

5. An example is mentioned by Nuligak in his previously mentioned autobiography. In July 1929, he sold his winter fur catch for \$2,799. Calculated on a monthly basis, this was twice the salary of an Alaskan reindeer herder, and more than either of the Porsild brothers' base pay. Nuligak met Finnie at that time because the director had come down river to offer five dollars to each Inuit as "treaty money". Nuligak spurned the offer as did most of the Inuit. He suggested instead that the "white chief" establish an overall fund to help the needy. In a sense, the reindeer program's purpose was to do just what Nuligak asked.
6. Porsild to Finnie, September 18, 1927.

## CHAPTER 3 (p.41)

1. Memo, Erling Porsild to W. W. Cory, Oct. 31, 1928.
2. *Fifty Years in Alaska*, Carl Lomen (David McKay, 1954) p. 250-51.
3. Eielson, with Sir Hubert Wilkens, was the first pilot to fly the Arctic Circle route from Alaska to Europe. The wreck was not discovered until late January. Both Eielson and Borland were dead.

## CHAPTER 4 (p.65)

1. Report, W. B. Miller to L. J. Palmer, Feb. 26, 1930. The following two excerpts are also from this report.
2. This plan, at best, was a vague one. If the herd had left in mid-October as first planned, they would have reached the Kobuk by year's end, and have been far beyond the Kobuk by fawning time. But judging by Bahr's preoccupation with the Kobuk cache before the drive even started, it is doubtful that he ever considered going farther than that by fawning time in April and May, 1930.

## CHAPTER 5 (p.87)

1. Letter, Bob Porsild to O. S. Finnie, June 3, 1930.
2. Letter, Bob Porsild to O. S. Finnie, Aug. 26, 1930.
3. Letter, Bob Porsild to O. S. Finnie, Nov. 10, 1930.
4. *Whitehorse Star*, no date.
5. *Whitehorse Star*, no date.

## CHAPTER 6 (p.102)

1. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Alfred Lomen, March 22, 1930.
2. Letter, Carl Lomen to Mike Nilluka, Sept. 20, 1930.
3. Letter, Mike Nilluka to Carl Lomen, Sept. 29, 1930.
4. Letter, Dan Crowley to G. J. Lomen, Sept. 21, 1930.

## CHAPTER 7 (p.117)

1. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Alfred Lomen, Jan. 3, 1931 (and subsequent 2 quotes).
2. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Alfred Lomen, March 9, 1931.
3. Letter, Dan Crowley to Alfred Lomen, April 9, 1931. Snow takes on a blue tint when seen from the air. Any break in the snow, such as animal tracks, appear white. The next two quotations are from this same report.

## CHAPTER 8 (p.140)

1. It was actually built at *Kooryuak*, seven miles upriver, but Kittigazuit was better known, therefore its name was used to identify the location of the reindeer camp. According to Park Warden Victor Allen, *Kooryuak*, loosely translated, means "main channel" and *Kittigazuit* means "where the river fans out and is shallow".
2. Letter, Erling Porsild to O. S. Finnie, Jan. 14, 1931.
3. Letter, Bob Porsild to O. S. Finnie, Feb. 28, 1931.
4. Memo, Erling Porsild to O. S. Finnie, May 6, 1930.
5. Letter, Ralph Lomen to O. S. Finnie, Jan. 27, 1931.
6. The combination of wind and cold have been calculated and placed on charts in determining what today is called the "wind chill factor". For example, if the mercury is 40 below zero Fahrenheit, and the wind is blowing 40 miles per hour, the temperature equivalency is 115 below zero. At this level, exposed flesh will freeze within thirty seconds!
7. *The Great Trek*, Max Miller (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1935), p. 152.
8. Letter of Andrew Bahr to Lomen Commercial Company, July 21, 1931.
9. The lemming's tiny bear-like tracks gave rise to his Inuit name, *kilanmiutaurak*, "the little one who came down from the sky". According to native legend, the lemming was the size of a bear in the heavens, where he originally lived.

One day he slipped and fell from his lofty perch, becoming smaller as he plunged earthward. Finally, when he plopped into the snow on earth, he had diminished to his present size of from five to six inches in length.

10. In defence of the two Lapps, their gripes were not illegitimate. Poor food and raggedy foot gear, Bahr's sluggish pace, and his partiality to the Wood brothers grated on them to the point of distraction.
11. Letter, Andrew Bahr to the Lomen Commercial Company, July 21, 1931.
12. Wire from Jack Smith to Alfred Lomen, July 21, 1932.

#### CHAPTER 9 (p.161)

1. Memo, D. L. McKeand to J. Lorne Turner, Dec. 23, 1931.
2. Memo, H. E. Hume to H. H. Rowatt, Aug. 13, 1932.
3. Memo, J. Doyle to H. E. Hume, Aug. 13, 1932.

#### CHAPTER 10 (p.177)

1. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Alfred Lomen, July 25, 1932.
2. *The Great Trek*, p. 251.
3. See *Alone Across the Top of the World*, David Irwin as told to Jack O'Brien, (Chicago: John G. Winston, 1935). Irwin eventually reached the area of Franklin's debacle, but failed to solve the mystery. The veil was partially lifted with publication of *Frozen in Time*, Owen Beatty and John Geiger (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1987).
4. *Alone Across the Top of the World*, p. 79-80.
5. *Alone Across the Top of the World*.

#### CHAPTER 11 (p.193)

1. Letter, Leonard Baldwin to H. E. Hume, Oct. 17, 1932.
2. Wire, Hume to Erling Porsild, Oct. 26, 1932.
3. Wire, Porsild to Hume, Nov. 5, 1932.
4. Memo, H. H. Rowatt to H. E. Hume, Nov. 5, 1932.
5. *Calgary Herald*, November 1, 1936.
6. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Ralph Lomen, March 7, 1933.
7. Wire, Bob Porsild to H. E. Hume, March 29, 1933.

#### CHAPTER 12 (p.209)

1. Drew University, *The Baldwin Legacy* (pamphlet).
2. *The Baldwin Legacy*.

3. Just about every major polar expedition experienced its share of internal trouble, even to the point of murder. This includes the alleged poisoning of Commander C.F. Hall by his physician in 1871. Over a century later, Hall's bones were examined and found to contain enough arsenic to have killed him. Another expedition that had its share of controversy was the Lady Franklin Bay group commanded by A.W. Greeley in 1882. One of the men, under starvation conditions, began to steal food from the larder. He was discovered and, since it was an army command, ordered confined to his sleeping bag pending court martial. He was found guilty and shot. Other notable feuds fostered in the Arctic included bitter rivalries between Cook and Peary, and Stefansson and Anderson.
4. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Ralph Lomen, May 21, 1933.
5. Letter, Dr. J. A. Urquhart to Erling Porsild, May 15, 1933.
6. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Ralph Lomen, May 21, 1933.
7. Polar bears are completely carnivorous, and unpredictable; thus with respect to man, they are one of the most dangerous animals in the world. The Lapps had increased their mobility by improvising ice skates before they set out. The blades were made from files, set on edge!
8. Wire, Erling Porsild to H. E. Hume, June 27, 1933. Also following extract.
9. Letter, H. E. Hume to Ralph Lomen, June 28, 1933.
10. Letter, Dan Crowley to Alfred Lomen, Sept. 4, 1933. Following extract from the same letter.
11. Letter, Carl Lomen to Ralph Lomen, July 8, 1933.

#### CHAPTER 13 (p.227)

1. Bahr was not stingy with youngsters. Fred Inglangasuk recalled as a boy at Kay Point that Bahr gave him raisins which he liked for the sweet taste. Fred's aunt, Elizabeth, married herder Terrence Driggs.
2. *Alaska Reindeer Herdsmen*, Olson, p.28.
3. Dick Manixa (aka Maniksuk), an Inuit, had been one of the foremost harpoon men in the whaling fleet in the early 1900s. He was a powerful man, and so tall "you fell over when you looked at him". He later moved back to his cabin.
4. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Ralph Lomen, Jan. 19, 1934.
5. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Ralph Lomen, March 18, 1934.

6. Report, Canadian Legation, April 17, 1934.

#### CHAPTER 14 (p.248)

1. Letter, Dan Crowley to Ralph Lomen, July 1, 1934.
2. Letter, Andrew Bahr to Ralph Lomen, April 18, 1934.
3. Letter, Dan Crowley to Ralph Lomen, Jan. 12, 1935.
4. Letter, Mikkel Pulk to Mrs. Pulk, Jan. 18, 1935 (translation).
5. Crowley to Lomen, Jan. 12, 1935.
6. Letter, Ralph Lomen to Dan Crowley, April 18, 1935.
7. The final tally was: females (all ages) — 1498; bulls and yearlings — 289; steers — 261; male fawns — 322.

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