

A Christmas Shopping Trip

Photos and story by

James H. Edwards

WE live at McCarthy, my wife, Maxine, and I and our two small children. And we like to do our shopping in Anchorage. But Anchorage is some three hundred miles from McCarthy and there is no road connecting McCarthy with the highway system, so we don't get to town very often. In fact, it had been more than a year since our last visit when, about Christmas time last year, we decided we should make a trip to the city.

There were lots of reasons for going—browsing through the stores, letting the children see Santa, doing some buying that we couldn't readily do by mail, and

so forth. I wanted to take the empty oxygen cylinder for my welding outfit and have it refilled, and we had about three hundred pounds of moose meat that we wanted to have cut and wrapped. Doing this was a real chore for us.

Small single-engine airplanes bring us our mail during the winter months and carry limited amounts of cargo and an occasional passenger. But with four of us and all of the gear required for two small children, in addition to the moose meat, the oxygen cylinder and some other heavy stuff, the plane trip just wasn't possible.

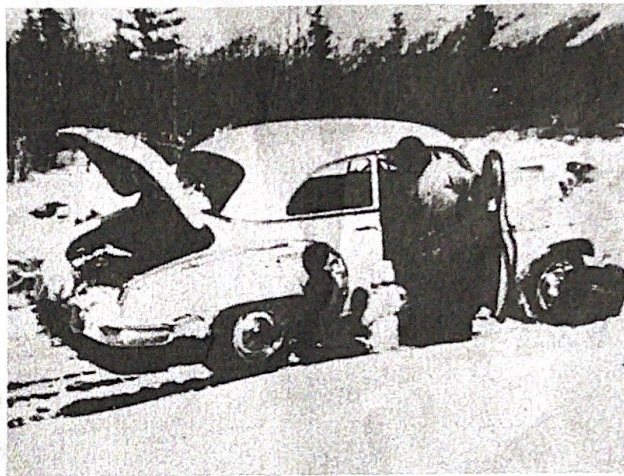
Then we got the idea of connecting

this trip with one I had planned for later in the winter. I had sold my previously wrecked Aeronca airplane, conditional to getting it to Chitina, and my plan was to haul it out with my crawler tractor and bring back some gasoline and diesel fuel in drums. Why not, we asked ourselves, pull the car part way out and drive the rest?

The more we thought about it, the more elaborate our plans became. And by the time we were through, we had decided to take the Cat to Long Lake, pulling our old passenger car, our Model A Ford truck loaded with returning barrels, the airplane on a sled, and its en-



We put a small heating stove in the back of the car, with its stovepipe sticking out a window.



Maxine and the two children rode in the car which was quite comfortable as long as there was a fire in the stove.

gine on another sled. The additional weight would be of little consequence to the Cat.

Perhaps I'd better explain the route we had to follow. There has never been a road into this area. However, the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad used to run from Cordova to Chitina and thence to McCarthy, and then on another four miles to Kennecott. The Kennecott Mines closed in 1938 and with it, the railroad. The old rail bed steadily deteriorated until it was difficult even to walk over.

However, in 1963, a salvage company completed the operation of picking up most of the rails and leaving in their place a fairly good pioneer access road. This road is about forty-five miles long, running from the Copper River across from Chitina to Long Lake. From Long Lake to McCarthy, about fifteen miles, the rails had been taken up some years

ago. Unfortunately, the summer working season ended before there was time to finish the rail project, and about two miles of rail were left in along the shore of Long Lake. This two-mile stretch was just enough to prevent driving right through.

We figured the Cat would get our caravan of equipment the thirteen miles to Long Lake, and over the bank and down onto the ice. Then the wheeled vehicles could take over, by-passing the section of road where the rails were, and drive on by the pioneer access road to the Copper River and Chitina. We had had very little snow by mid-December, and could only hope it would not snow much before the return trip.

A most auspicious day was picked for departure—Friday, the thirteenth day of December. With luck, we could reach Anchorage at the beginning of the week, so that there would be a maxi-

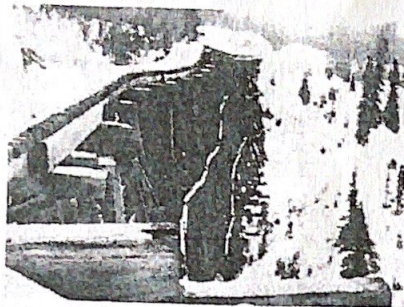
mum number of days that the stores would be open during our stay.

We got up at one a.m. There were a lot of last minute things to be done: the car to be packed, the children's things to get together, food to be packed, the tractor started (which can be an hour's work in winter), and the whole train of equipment to be lined up and hitched together. It was six o'clock before we were on our way out of town.

I had built a small set of skids for the front tires of the car to rest on, with a cable tow and pipe spacers to prevent it running up onto the Cat on down grades. The car is an old 1949 Chevrolet which I had towed in behind the tractor in 1961. It has a lot of dents from being pulled through the brush, but it still runs and has all its windows intact. Its heater is not very good, and during this first leg of the trip the engine would not be running anyway, so we

had removed the rear seat and installed a small airtight wood heater. A five gallon gasoline can formed a safety for the stove pipe, which was left projecting from the rear window of the car. With a small supply of dry wood, Maxine

The trestle at the east end of Long Lake is about four hundred feet long, about seventy feet high in the center, and not in very good shape.



could keep herself and the children quite comfortable.

We hitched the car directly behind the Cat. A chain passed under the car and, guided by a hitch on the rear bumper, was used to pull a tow, consisting of a large bent sheet of metal with a guide rail welded on each side. Upon this plate the front wheels of the truck rested, one wheel to each rail. On the bed of the truck were eighteen empty gas drums to be returned in exchange for full ones. Behind the truck came the sled with the dismantled airplane, and behind that a smaller sled to which we had lashed the airplane's engine. As an afterthought, I had tied a small trailer behind this with some more empty barrels.

It made quite an outfit. It was over ninety feet long when assembled.

We had good going for the first five miles or so along the Kennicott River. We even made it around several bends without mishap. At this point, the rail grade is upon a bank, a hundred feet or more above the river bottom. There is one spot along this bank where it is not so steep, and the past summer I had dug a switchback Cat road to get up and down. At this point, due to the switchback turns, we had to pull the car up first, leaving the truck and sleds behind, then go back down the hill and bring them up, and hook up again.

In coming around the sharp turns, the truck jumped the guide rail and went off its tow skid. The car was also somewhat out of line. They each had to be pushed off and back onto their respective tows with the Cat, realigned and relashed. We lost a lot of time at this work.

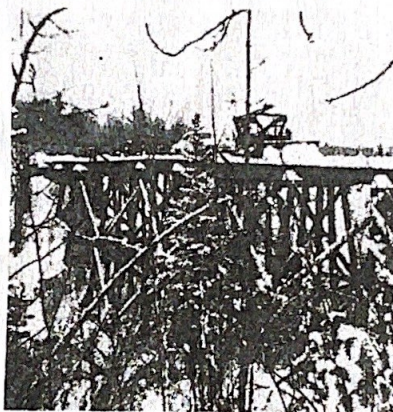
We were up on the rail guide by about ten a. m., however, and looked forward to some steady traveling. But it was not to be.

For some reason, the truck ran just a little out of the side of the track made by the car. The sled was a little out from that and so on down the line. They would ride this way for some time on one side, and then switch over and ride awhile on the other side. Since the trail is quite narrow, it took a great deal of twisting around in the Cat seat to follow this action and steer accordingly.

I wasn't long until the trailer, way out behind, ran off the bank and caught on a tree. Up in front on the opposite side of the road, it was hard to see this in time. Going back, I found the axle badly bent. So we had to unhitch the trailer and leave it there.

Along the way there are a number of small bridges and culverts which are only about seven feet wide between the

Some of the vehicles in our long train didn't track quite straight and crossing those narrow railroad bridges was a problem.



six-inch guard rails. With the sleds tracking two or three feet to one side, these bridges were a real problem. We crossed several of them by steering way over to one side, and then veering back to cross in the last few feet. But sooner or later one gets caught.

It was a culvert not twelve feet across. The sled runner got outside the guard rail, and went across the tips of the ties. I pulled it over with heart in mouth, for the airplane would have tipped completely over had the runner slipped off. That sled made it, but the small one did not. It slipped over and was left hanging, one runner caught on the bridge, the other in mid-air underneath. The 280-pound engine was well lashed on and did not slip, but it was hopeless to think of just the two of us lifting it back onto the bridge. To pull it further would cause it to slip entirely off and drop about four feet onto the ice below, probably damaging the engine.

Maxine and I were back surveying the

problem, and I was sending up some blue smoke, when she asked, "What's that?"

We turned around and up walked Bob Dettinger and Fred Maitland, who had been down at Long Lake and were walking into McCarthy. Miles from nowhere, and along came manpower at that moment! Without further ado, they put down their packs, and in a jiffy the three of us had the sled back on the bridge. Talk about luck.

Bob and Fred went their way and we went ours. We had a couple more minor troubles with the sled wandering back and forth, and over the bank a place or two, but we made it to the east end of Long Lake just before dark. We still had to get across the trestle, down the bank to the level of the lake, and then drive the three miles across the ice to where we had heard there was a fair shelter cabin.

The trestle at the east end of Long Lake is a shaky affair, at best. It is over four hundred feet across, and about seventy feet high in the center. Quite a few of the pilings are rotted completely off at the bottom, and the frost has heaved both a hump and a sway to the deck, which is at least ten feet out of line, both vertically and sideways. It is always a bit frightening to drive a seven-ton Cat across it. But it held, and besides, by the time we crossed, it was so dark we could not see the canyon well enough to be afraid.

We brought the small sled up from the rear and loaded the meat (which had been on the truck) onto the sled with the engine. Then we fastened it onto the hitch on the rear of the car. Leaving the truck and the other sled, we went across the trestle and down through the brush to the lake. Since there was no trail to follow, we could only go down the hill at the most likely looking spot, as it was too dark to do much searching around for a shallower slope.



Since there was no trail to follow, we had to go down through the brush to the lake.

Please turn to page 50

Shushana Rush

Continued from page 47

then after a day or two, you're afraid you won't," is most certainly true. But oh, how wonderful you feel when you really do get over it.

On reaching Juneau, our gang separated somewhat reluctantly, but with the gold bug definitely out of our systems. I didn't get my girl, but I did get the position as principal of the high school, which proved to be a real delight with probably the best group of students that could be found anywhere. ▲



We got our meat down to the river by throwing it over the edge of the fifty-foot bluff and picking it up below.

Christmas Shopping Trip

Continued from page 35

We tied a chain around the sled runner to increase friction, and with Maxine holding the brake on the car, we got down safely. Once out on the ice, the snow was only about six inches deep, and the car could go under its own power. So we shut down the Cat and started down the lake with the car and small sled. Later we learned that directly ahead of where we came onto the lake was a large muskrat hole. Had we gone straight out onto the lake instead of turning along the shore, we would surely have gone right to the bottom. We

could not have seen the hole in the dark, because of its thin layer of ice and frost.

I had seen the cabin at the lake before from the road, but had not been in it. We pulled up near it a little after six p.m., very hungry and tired after seventeen hours of struggling with our equipment. It was about ten degrees below zero, and we were anxious to get into someplace warm.

There are two or three little cabins there, and the first one we came to had a hospitable sign on the door: "You are welcome to use this cabin. Please be careful of fire."

We opened the door, and what a let down! A few scraps of old wood, a stove almost completely rusted away, and some bits of trash. It was dismaying to think of trying to care for two tired little kids in there.

But a check around the other cabins revealed one in far better shape with a good barrel stove, beds and a table. There was just enough wood to get the place warm, and we had a good supper and got comfortable again. I went out with my chain saw after we had eaten and found enough wood in a patch of

timber nearby to last through the night.

We did not get a very early start the next morning. We were so overly tired that we slept late, and then it is always time consuming to get small children up and ready. Also I had to go out and saw more wood to leave, as we had burned most of what was cut.

We had no trouble crossing the Lakin River as the ice was frozen smoothly to the shore, and we made good time for a while down the new pioneer access road. But after a few miles the snow started to thin out. There was less and less until we started going across places that were completely bare. This was fine for the car, but the sled with the meat and engine on it did not fare so well. We could see that the sled would not take this for very long, so we were forced to leave it to be picked up on a later trip.

The meat, however, could not be left. The only thing to do was somehow load it into the car. That meant taking the stove out, as the meat took up so much extra room. We finally got it in, but we faced a cold ride ahead.

We had gone only a short way when we came to a glacier in the road. Seepage from the hill had frozen in the culverts and was running over. The ice was well over a foot thick on one side of the road, and sloped down to only an inch or two on the other. The top surface was soft in places, so that the car would break through. In others, it was quite hard and smooth, presenting the danger of slipping off into the ditch. We came upon eight or ten of these glaciers within the next few miles. Two of them had formed very large humps, some four feet of ice on the upper side and a very sharp slope. At these, it was advisable to get out and make a plan. A slight miscalculation, and the car would be in the ditch. But by steering towards the high side and having just enough momentum to carry across, we made it, although the car was skidding badly before hitting the gravel on the opposite side.

After we passed this area of glaciating we made very good time and got up to twenty-five miles an hour in places. We arrived at Strelna about an hour before dark.

There were two fellows trapping at Strelna, which is about fourteen miles from Chitina. We stopped to visit for a few minutes, and ask if they had been to the Copper River lately. Sam and Ray were quite helpful, and told us that there were no more glaciers along the way, but they did not know if we could get down to the river bank or not. There is a fairly steep hill right at the river, and they said it was icy. They offered us room to stay with them, if we would prefer to get to the river in the day-

**GET THIS FAMOUS
FILSON CRUISING COAT**
Long-wearing & comfortable!
Thru Your Local Dealer
For a complete description
write to **C. C. FILSON CO.**
Maritime Bldg., Seattle 4, Wash.
Since 1897

EAR NOISES relieved!

... thousands reported

Wonderful relief from years of suffering from miserable ear noises and poor hearing caused by catarrhal (excess fluid mucus) conditions of the head. For the past 23 years that's what folks (many past 70) reported after using our simple Elmo Palliative HOME TREATMENT. NOTHING TO WEAR. SOME of the symptoms likely to go with your catarrhal deafness and ear noises; mucus dropping in nose or throat every day; hear—but don't understand words; hear better on clear days—worse on bad days; ear noises like crickets, bells or others.

Write TODAY for PROOF OF RELIEF and 30 DAY TRIAL OFFER. Pay only if helped. THE ELMO CO., Dept. 5AST, Madrid, Iowa



SEE

Classified Ad in
this issue for

180

35 MM SUPER SLIDES

IN FULL COLOR

of

Western Alaska Livelihood

The Chinook CUSTOM CAMPER "YOUR HOME... AWAY FROM HOME"



Mfg. by Mair & Son.

Sportsmen, Campers, Travelers—agree on the wonderful comfort, durability and versatility of Chinook Campers!

- Fiberglass Insulation throughout
- Large Exit Window in sleeper
- Pre-finished Aluminum Exterior
- Inlaid Vinyl Linoleum, other top features

SOLD BY ALL TRUCK DEALERS in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

NELSON TRUCK EQUIPMENT CO., Inc.
(Northwest and Alaska Distributors)

128 Westlake Ave., N., Seattle 9, Washington

light. This sounded good, so we did.

With a good cabin and plenty of room, we had a fine supper. Sam and Ray really lighted up when they saw our jar of sugar. The river had not been safely frozen on their last trip, and they were unable to get supplies. They were really starved for sugar.

The next day after an easy hour and a half to the river, it was immediately apparent that we could not drive down that hill. It had rained and then frozen, and the ground was entirely covered with smooth glare ice.

We still had a mile and a half to go to the town of Chitina. As it was quite cold out and slippery as well, I left Maxine and the kids in the car with the heater going, and went to get a friend to bring his car down to the other side of the river to get them. All this was accomplished without mishap, and we were soon enjoying warmth and hot coffee.

Later that evening my friend and I went back and got the baggage and meat out of the car. The road was far too slick to walk up, so we threw the meat down the fifty-foot bluff and slid down with the baggage. It was too slippery to even walk with a load, but with a rope and a child's sled, we dragged the things across the river ice to the car.

The following day another friend loaned us his pickup truck and we loaded all our heavy things in that, and drove on in to Anchorage. We had an enjoyable time. The children saw Santa and all the bright decorations and the stores full of toys. And we felt that we had earned our vacation by just getting there. ▲

Cold Starts

Continued from page 33

as a safe, reliable and economical aircraft engine heater.

I purchased one from a local garage at Delta Junction, Alaska, for \$35. It already was wired for twelve volts, the same voltage as most automobiles. For easy maneuverability, I mounted it on my daughter's metal play wagon with a welding torch, after cutting a small hole in the bottom of the wagon for the heater's exhaust. A two-gallon fuel tank was connected on the rear of the unit, a twelve-volt electric fuel pump was attached, and fuel lines were connected. The positive and negative electric lines were installed on the outside of the wagon to drive the heater through the use of a pair of jump cables attached to my automobile battery. A nine-foot flexible wire coiled asbestos heat duct transferred the heat to my aircraft engine.

When it was ready for testing, the weather was a comfortable minus-twenty degrees and the wind calm. Within a few

minutes the hookup was made, and clean heat was pouring out at the rate of 20,000 BTU. The engine cowling was covered with a heavy blanket; the two front air intakes and the bottom outlets were sealed off with heavy cloth. The hot air was directed to the bottom of the crankcase, causing the oil to heat first and the air to flow up and around the engine and accessory group, drying and warming it evenly.

Twenty minutes had elapsed by the time I had completed my pre-flight check and cleared the snow and frost from the wing surfaces and windshield. The heater was shut down and the heat duct was disconnected. My Cherokee 160 started from the battery after the propeller spun once.

In my spare time, I am flight instructor for the Fort Greely Flying Club. Local pilots call upon me frequently to assist them in their cold-weather starts with my heater. It can be placed in the trunk of most automobiles, or pulled by the wagon tongue. In addition, the air duct can be tucked into numerous small openings to assist in getting balky equipment going, thawing out pipes, or heating small buildings for short periods of time. I have used my heater for two seasons, and it has never failed to start my Cherokee or a friend's aircraft, even in minus-forty-degree temperatures.

These personnel heaters are available through most military surplus stores and are priced between \$20 and \$40, depending on their condition. They are compact, simple and completely safe if properly constructed and operated. The heater burns only one quart of automobile fuel an hour. (One word of caution: never leave any gasoline-powered heater unattended.) My whole rig cost only \$51, including the associated parts.

There was one other little item of expense, however, brought to my attention by my daughter. The trouble is, she's growing so fast that now she wants a record player in place of the wagon I confiscated. ▲

Of Katsu, A Star,

Continued from page 29

dry grasses and she was smiling and in the crook of her arm a child stirred.

"It is a strong child!" said one chief. "See his arms and legs!"

"It is a happy child!" said another chief. "Hear him—like the dove and like the bubbling spring!"

"And he is good!" said Katsu. "See the love in his eyes!"

And The Voice came down and said "These things are true and he shall be chief of all you chiefs and you shall follow him wheresoever he shall go!"

And the chiefs fell down and said, "Oh, Master! We will! And we bring gifts!"

And the child smiled and a chubby arm reached out and grasped from Katsu's pile of treasure from his People Of The Totem the little doeskin bag of fire agates.

"Such a little thing!" said Katsu. "See also the rich furs—and the chests—and the wonderful tools I bring!"

The child cooed and the chubby arm flung the doeskin bag and its fire agates and the agates spilled and their colors were caught up in the light of the fire and of the star. The colors grew and faded, grew stronger, grew lighter, and the child smiled.

In the land of The People Of The Totem, the villagers looked up in awe at the flashing colors in the northern sky. It was truly a wondrous thing. ▲

Map of Alaska

Know Alaska better! Follow the news, trace the history of the 49th State on this huge map. It measures more than 48" by 33", folds in pocket only 4½" by 8¾". Towns, cities indexed. Table of distances. Insets show Anchorage-Kenai, Fairbanks areas.

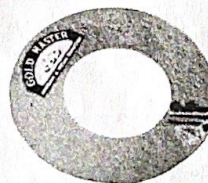
Only \$1.95 postpaid

Alaska Sportsman

Box 1271

Juneau, Alaska

NOW! THE NEW GOLD-MASTER MODEL S63



Comes with natural gold nugget that it will detect.
5% discount for cash



The new GOLD-MASTER Mineral, Metal and Treasure finder can detect small Gold and Silver nuggets, Rings, Coins, Mineral float, Veins and Treasures. NO EARPHONES. A powerful speaker is used. Comes with two loops, one for small nuggets and one for treasures and veins. SIMPLE TO OPERATE. Comes with samples, instructions and fresh batteries.

COMPLETE, ONLY \$169.50—\$29.50 down, Balance at \$10.57 per month—FREE LITERATURE

Detects: Gold - Silver - Copper - Coins
- Rings - Treasures - Metals and other
Mineral Deposits - GUARANTEED!

WHITE'S ELECTRONICS

1218 Main St., Dept. A.L., Sweet Home, Ore.