

Travel by dog team

**Trials and tribulations of running a
dog team**

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Ancestral roots in Norway

Alfred Anderson



Figure 1 Alf Anderson with a picture of his dog team

One of five sons

Alfred (Alf) Anderson grew up in L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland; the son of Charles (Charlie) Anderson and Delena Bartlett. He was one of five sons: William Job (Job), Alfred (Alf), Henry Maxwell (Max), Gower (Gow), and Gerald Dorman (Dorman). Alf was born on August 10, 1925.

Charles Anderson, Alf's father, was the son of Alfred James Anderson, who in turn was the son of ⁱThorsten Anderson, born in the district of Valdres in Norway, who immigrated to Canada and settled in Makkovik, Labrador. Thorsten worked as a ⁱⁱcooper for the Hudson's Bay Company and married a Labrador woman; they had many children.

From Makkovik to St. Anthony

Charlie contracted tuberculosis of the ankle and was hospitalized in Battle Harbour. When he had sufficiently

recovered, he was brought to St. Anthony by Dr. Wilfred Grenfell at the age of 14.

According to Alf Anderson, Charlie wasn't the only young man Grenfell brought from Labrador; there were five others, all who became herders of reindeer on the northern peninsula. These five young men, and Charlie, were all buddies but, sadly, Charlie's five friends' didn't live long.

Grenfell's Reindeer experiment

"I think my father, Charlie, was one of the last to herd the reindeer that Grenfell brought to the area," remarks Mr. Anderson. When Grenfell brought the reindeer herds to the northern peninsula, he had also brought a number of ⁱⁱⁱLaplanders to assist in establishing the herd and to train local people how to care for them.

Mr. Anderson says he thinks Grenfell brought the reindeer over to harness them for hauling wood, for their meat, for their skins and for their milk.

He recalls that the reindeer were kept in various locations on the northern peninsula: New Harbour, St. Anthony Cape, the south side of Compton's Steady on the Griquet Road, and St. Lunaire. "They tried to keep the reindeer in one place, but they had a lot of trouble doing that; the reindeer had a tendency to wander off." Then there was the problem with sled dogs. "It wasn't that the reindeer were no good for hauling wood," says Mr. Anderson, "but the dogs wouldn't leave them alone; they'd kill them if they could."

If the reindeer were harnessed they had no way of defending themselves and often a whole team of dogs would attack the reindeer all at once.

Eventually, most of the reindeer were taken to Labrador by boat, then herded across North America, because the project failed for various reasons.

When the First World War broke out, Charlie and his five fellow herders were quick to enlist. Charlie, because of his TB ankle, was declared medically unfit, but his five friends signed up and were dispatched overseas to the battlefield. Charlie, though disabled, lived a full life, whereas his five friends never returned from the war. They were all killed in action.

From L'Anse aux Meadows to St. Anthony

Until the mid-60s, there were no roads—and therefore no cars—in L'Anse aux Meadows. Travel in summer was by boat and in winter, by dog team or snowmobile. Not everybody owned a snowmobile, either; usually only one or two families in a community. Snowmobiles were not like the fast-moving snow machines of today; they were made by Bombardier and were used for transporting passengers or hauling supplies over snowy terrain. Like cars, they were fueled by gasoline. The snowmobile was fitted with skis on the front and tracks on either side for traction on snow and ice. While they were useful, there was a downside; in soft snow the snowmobiles often got bogged down and were hard to dig out, while on hard-pack snow, lakes, ponds and marshes, they could reach speeds of up to 60 mph.

The Anderson family owned a Bombardier snowmobile and, because of that, were often asked for rides. "I was the one who was always picked to go; people were asking for rides day or night. I eventually got fed up with it," says Anderson. The young man had worked alongside his father as a fisherman, but at the age of 32 years old he pulled up stakes, left L'Anse aux Meadows and headed for the town of St. Anthony to start his own fishing enterprise.

That was in 1957, and Alf was already married with children. "I married Pearl Carpenter from St. Anthony. We had three children: Dwight, Jim and Audrey."

Today, Dwight lives in St. Anthony, Jim lives in Vancouver and Audrey is now in St. John's. Pearl has been in the John M. Gray Center since 2008 and Alf has been in Shirley's Haven since 2011.

Fisherman, carpenter and driver

When Mr. Anderson moved to St. Anthony, he set up a fishing enterprise for himself. "I had ^{iv}sharemen and we fished out of St. Anthony. I did that for six years," he recalls. In the early 1960s he was offered a job as a carpenter, helping to build the new Curtis Memorial Hospital. The following year he worked on the new Anglican Church and, after that, he was employed by the International Grenfell Association (IGA) at the Dry Dock, where he worked for

five or six years. After that, he was employed at the RT room as a driver. He continued there until his retirement.

Sports Day and the Grenfell Dog Team Race

At first, Mr. Anderson's job with the IGA didn't provide year-round employment. For the first three or four years he was laid off every fall, so he went to work in the woods, sawing lumber and selling it. "And that," he said, "was how we survived."

In order to work in the woods, Mr. Anderson needed a dog team, and he had a team of seven—the lead dog was named Mutt and some of the others were named Freckles, Gin, Smut and Tim. "I thought Mutt was a wonderful lead dog and all the dogs were good for pulling a komatik, so I decided to enter my team in the dog team race on Sports Day in St. Anthony," he smiles.

The evening before the race a storm blew in, but Mr. Anderson harnessed his team and they circled the harbour anyway, and, much to Alf's satisfaction, the team was in fine form. By the time he got back to the dock the storm had lightened so he directed the dogs homeward across the harbour to the east side at Old Man's Neck.

The day of the race dawned and, to Mr. Anderson's recollection, there must have been 25 or 30 teams at the starting line, raring to go. Finally, the race was on. The teams raced around the harbour in a loop, their drivers shouting commands and snapping their whips over the dogs' heads. Alf's team was out in front and running hard.

Suddenly, the lead dog, Mutt, swung off towards the other side of the harbour with the team behind him, apparently deaf to Alf's commands. "I got mad and swore," recalls Mr. Anderson, "and some dogs, if you swore, that was it; they'd put down their tail and you couldn't do anything with them." He shakes his head. "Mutt was a good leader; I could put him around any tree in the country; I could get him to go anywhere and do anything, but he failed when he got to the race."

Mutt's sudden departure from the race didn't stop Anderson from trying to get the team back on track, and finally Mutt responded to his master's urgent commands and rejoined the race. "We came in fifth place, but after that race I never bothered to race again," he says, shaking his head ruefully.

Transitioning from sled dog to ski-doo

Rick Tucker
Ship Cove



Figure 2 Rick Tucker was a fisherman with an intimate connection to the sea. He knew all the names of the places, the islands, and the rocks. Photo: Aaron Beswick



Figure 3 A snapshot of the boy, Ricky Tucker, playing with puppies (future sled dogs) in his yard at Ship Cove.

By the time Rick Tucker of Ship Cove came of age and was able to drive a dog team, snowmobiles—or ‘ski-doo’s as they were called by the local population—had just begun to take hold in northern Newfoundland and dog teams were about to become a relic of the past. Rick’s father Selby had known no other means of winter transportation than dog teams, but Rick came to manhood on the threshold of a new day and would forsake the dog team his father had once depended upon in favour of a motorized vehicle.

Rick was about fifteen or sixteen years old when he first drove a dog team. At that time he thought it was a good experience, although he admits the dogs could be hard to handle.

“But then, everybody had a team and they were all in the same boat,” he says.

Learning the ropes from his father

Rick’s father Selby had a team of seven to nine dogs. Traces were fashioned out of bank line, which was a rope with a softer texture than the traditional trawl line used by fishermen. The lead dog, usually a female, had the longest line, while the other dogs had lines of varying lengths so they could run in a single-file formation, which was good on wooded trails. The lead dog

knew the commands: when to turn to the left or to the right, and when to stop. When she was given a command, she would look back over her shoulder and watch for the arm signal, and obey it.

Rick recalls that if a bitch (female dog) had a litter of pups to feed, her teats might freeze in cold weather, so in order to keep her running with the team through the long, bitterly cold months of winter, a ^vbelly-band was used for protection.

Rick often had to get the dogs into their traces and attach them to the ^{vi}komatik with a metal snap, and sometimes by the time he had the last dog hooked on there was another dog chewing on another dog's trace, and bite it off. Then Rick would have to get the dog and tie him back on again. The dogs were always raring to go and full of high spirits.

Rick recalls, "The Old Man (Selby) was their master. They weren't pets, they were working dogs. When Father bawled out, they did exactly what he said. He had them all named, too." Some of their names were Spot, Smug, Arrow, Poncho, Sport and Lady.

Although they were working dogs they were quick to learn and could be very helpful. "When Father would take out the axe in the morning, Lady would be there, and when he cut the ^{vii}splits, he'd put a split in her mouth and she'd go on in, put the split on the floor, go on out and wait for another one. And if he put two in her mouth, she'd know where to go...she'd take them inside and she knew where to drop them." But Rick is quick to add that even though Lady performed domestic duties she was never considered a pet. "She was a komatik dog...a working dog."

Feeding the team

An important aspect of owning a dog team was providing food; after all, a dog was only as good as the food that fueled it. Although dog feed could be purchased at the merchant's, it was often supplemented at home with food such as fish or seal meat. A hot meal was especially beneficial in winter when the dogs were working.

"In the summer, when the ^{viii}capelin came in," says Rick, "you'd spread them on the beach, the sun would dry them and then you'd pick them up and put them in bags. That was the dog food for the winter. Then, before Christmas, you'd put out seal nets and you'd get the seals—old harps and ^{ix}bellimers—then you'd store the seals away—put them in your store or shed and let them freeze.

"Then Father would say, 'Well, boy, got to get a seal for my dogs,' so down to the stage he'd go and bring up a seal, perhaps six or eight feet long, and haul it right on inside the house, and lay it right alongside the woodstove, back in between the woodstove and the wall. And it might take four or five days to thaw."

Seal, capelin, flatfish

"As children, we'd sit astride the seal, or even lie down alongside it. There can't be anything cleaner than a killed seal without any blood on him; sure, you could take him up in your arms. But some of the old harp seals were eight or nine feet long. When the seal had thawed, Father would get the knife and take him outdoors and take the pelt off. He'd want the fat for the dogs; it was about two inches thick. There was Mother, cooking a pot of dog meal on the stove, and then Father cut up the seal fat and he'd heave it in with the meal. He'd take pieces of the

carcass and heave it in, and add some capelin, too.” He pauses, and then adds, “The dogs would whack that down their guts!”

There were other types of food dogs could eat as well as capelin and seal meat. Selby built a scaffold up alongside the house, and in the fall of the year he’d go to the cove, which had a sandy bottom, and look for flatfish, which would be there in the sand with just their eyeballs sticking out. Rick recalls his father would bring home barrels and barrels of flatfish and store it up on top of the scaffold in the winter—out of reach of the dogs—where it would freeze. When they needed flatfish for the dogs all they had to do was step outside the door.



Figure 4 In the fishing store. Photo: Aaron Beswick

Dogs on ice

Selby and Rick used the dog team for hauling wood and bringing home seals on the ice in the spring of the year. The ice was far from smooth, with many bumps or rough patches, often with seals concealed behind. “You’d pelt your seals and hook on about three or four pelts and the dogs would haul them in for you. Now, if we couldn’t keep up with the dogs, Father would say, ‘Home!’ and they’d go home.” Sometimes, though, the dog traces got caught on ‘pinnacles of ice, and the team would be brought up solid, and the dogs would be barking.

“Father would go up and untangle their traces. Then he’d say, ‘Git! Go on!’ and away they’d go.”

On the ice, there was always plenty of space for dog teams to stretch out, but in the woods, or along established dog paths, it was a different matter. “You might be going across the bay when it was froze up, along the dog team path: you’d be coming and someone else going. You’d pass along by them and there’d be a great big snarl. You’d try not to go too handy to the other feller and his team, but darn me, sometimes, what a snarl! And now you had to get out and try to clear them up.”

A good dog was always ready to work

Not all dogs were anxious to pull a komatik. According to Rick, a good dog was a dog that was always ready to work. “In the morning, if you’d go out with a harness in your hand, as soon as you’d shake the harness, you’d see them coming. And they’d stand up right alongside of

you, waiting for you to put that harness on. And some dogs, as soon as they'd see you coming with the harness, they'd be gone.”

Times were tough and money scarce, so a good dog was a blessing and a lazy dog was a hindrance. The average life span of a komatik dog was eight or nine years. “But if he wasn't no good...he'd live for twenty,” remarks Rick. “But you wouldn't keep anything that wasn't no good; it was a waste of grub...a waste of time.”

A good dog was a dog that could also be trusted and would protect his master's property. Rick remembers, “Father had one dog, a big dog, and Father used to have a ^{xi}scatter rabbit slip out, you see, and he'd catch a scatter rabbit. And all he had to do was get a rabbit—there might be a team of eight or nine dogs—and he'd ^{xiii}lodge the rabbit on his komatik, and that dog would lie down alongside that rabbit, and make sure that the other dogs wouldn't touch that rabbit; and he wouldn't touch it himself. And you know the dog was hungry...out there in the woods, and he wouldn't have nothing at all to eat before he'd get his supper in the evening.”



Figure 5 It wasn't an easy life, but Rick Tucker enjoyed it to the full. Photo Aaron Beswick

It wasn't an easy life

According to Rick, running a dog team didn't make for an easy life. “I know now what the Old Man went through years ago. Half the time you had to get off the sled and help the dogs. Back then they didn't have plastic on the komatik runners, they had old iron shoes. The shoes would stick on the snow, especially if there was a little salt water in the spring of the year.” With the cooperation of the dog team and the driver—and a great deal of exertion—the sled would be freed from the grip of snow and ice, and they'd move on.

Dog team ambulance

There were no ambulances in those days, but Rick recalls if someone was sick or if there was an emergency, there were certain people in a community that could be called upon to transport the sick or injured to the hospital. In Ship Cove it was Rick's grandfather, Kenneth Tucker.

“Now, Ken, boy,—that's what they used to call Grandfather—‘such-and-such a person is sick; are you ready to go to St. Anthony?’ (A trip to St. Anthony on dog team would take the best part of the day, and there were times when Kenneth had to run all the way instead of riding on the sled.)

“And he’d say, ‘Yes, boy.’ Grandfather was the main john to go to St. Anthony. He’d put the sick people in the coachbox, cover them up and drive them to the hospital. Well that was a wonderful thing.”

“Now that’s the rig!”

When it came to roads or trails for dog teams, there weren’t any prescribed trails in the way that there are mapped-out routes and roads today. Rick learned the best routes by listening to his father and through his own experience. Occasionally people put up markers, or ^{xiii}sticks. The only sticks Rick remembers were between L’Anse aux Meadows and Gull Pond. “I know all the names of the places, the islands, and the rocks. Father told me that many times that I remember them all.”

When the road came through to Ship Cove in the mid-60s, that’s when everything began to change. Ski-doo’s were replacing dog teams. Now a man could take his ski-doo into the woods, hook on a load of wood, and haul it home. The sight and sound of a ski-doo zipping across the snow—to most men, was a wonderful thing—and everybody wanted one.

“Now that’s the rig!” they’d say.

With the advent of the ski-doo, dog teams were soon side-lined; eventually becoming a relic of a by-gone day, and now, only a memory of the past.

Dog Teams: principal means of transportation

Selby & Delilah Tucker
Ship Cove



Figure 6 Selby and Delilah share their memories of working with dog teams in the days before cars

Selby and Delilah Tucker lived in the community of Ship Cove all their lives. There were no roads or cars in Ship Cove prior to the mid-60s, so the primary means of transportation was dog team in the winter and a boat in summer. Otherwise, people walked.



Figure 7 Selby with his first child, Gordon, in 1948.

In their story they share their experiences with sled dogs, their uses, and the trials and heartaches of owning dog teams.

Dogs used for hauling ^{xiv}komatiks were not necessarily wild, but they weren't pets either. In winter, they roamed free but they knew where their home was, who their owner was, and the boundaries of their territory. Some of Selby's dogs' names were Black, Timer, Bear, Chook, Guess, Carlo, Skipper, Brown, Lady, Spot, and Stump.

Kept in a 'dog pound'

In summer, dogs were kept in a ^{xv}pound down by the stages, some distance from the house. Livestock, such as sheep, ducks, goats, and hens were left to roam. The dogs were penned up because they would have killed the livestock. Selby declares that the hens were worse than the dogs for getting into mischief; he had to put a ^{xvi}spancel across their back so they wouldn't get in and dig up the gardens. Delilah remembers if they had a broody hen with chicks, the chicks would get in through the pickets and the hen would want to get in, and if there was any place she could squeeze in, she would. Goats also wore spancels, called yokes, made of three strips of wood in the shape of a triangle and placed around their necks, and that kept them out of the gardens.

Harnesses and Traces were handmade

Harnesses were made out of rope, with a canvas sleeve sewn over the rope and fit around the head and the legs. The rope that Selby used to make the traces and harnesses was called bank line; it was softer, for instance, than trawl line. The traces ran from the sled to the dogs, and each dog's harness was attached to the traces with a snap. Sometimes the dog harnesses were decorated with colourful toggles, ribbons or yarn. Each dog pulled on a certain side and each dog remembered his or her position on the team.

On the mainland, and up north, sled dogs pull side-by-side with a single dog in the lead, but the method used by Selby Tucker was to have the lead dog, usually a female, out in front with the longest trace and the other dogs with varying trace lengths pulling in single file behind the lead dog. People might have six or seven dogs in a team, some eight to ten, and others as many as ten or eleven. When the driver gave the command to go left or right, the lead dog led the pack and the team followed.

“Now! Git Home!”

Delilah tells the following story about two men in the community to illustrate how readily dogs obeyed their masters.

“Hayward Tucker and Willie went over back of the land one time with a team of dogs to go out in boat in the spring of the year. When they got over there, now, what was they going to do with their dogs? The two of them wanted to go out in boat. So Hayward said, ‘Now, boy, slew the dogs around and we’ll send them home.’ When the dogs turned he ordered them, ‘Now, git home!’ He watched as they ran up the cove and disappeared over the ridge; and sure enough, the dogs went straight home, right up to the door, and someone at the house unharnessed them.”

Dog team and komatik aimed for disaster

In the early 1960s Selby Tucker was laid up for two years with tuberculosis, and some of the work fell to his young sons. One day Bob and Len Tucker were sent ‘up on the land’, a property ‘up around the shore’ where they routinely cut wood (where the Highways garage is currently located) for the winter. The boys were about 13 and 8 years old respectively.

They hitched up the dog team and off they went.

It was always a challenge for anyone, especially a young boy, to control a dog team because the dogs were half-wild and always pulled the komatik on full-throttle. This day would be no different.

In the woods, Bob and Len cut a load of wood while the dogs slept in the snow, but once the komatik was loaded the dogs were anxious to be on the trail and headed homeward.

Bob and Len jumped on the komatik and aimed it back down the trail, which ran down over the hill to the ^{xvii}land-wash. At the bottom of the hill was a sharp left turn, and it was plain to see that the dogs were running much too fast and that the komatik with its load of wood was on a collision course with a belt of trees at the bottom of the hill. Bob, sitting on the nose rope, tried to steer the komatik with his feet, but he was no match for the speed of the dog team or the weight of the sled. With no time to throw out the ^{xviii}drug, Bob knew he was in trouble. Len, sensing peril, threw himself off the komatik into a snowdrift.

The dogs managed the turn nicely, but the komatik swung away from the path, ploughed sideways through the snow and smashed into the stand of trees, thus bringing dog team and sled to a dead standstill. Tails waving, tongues lolling, the dogs watched as Len floundered through the snow to the komatik, where Bob was pinned by a fallen tree to the nose rope. "I'd still be there today if Len hadn't found the ax and cut me loose," laughs Bob.

The two boys took stock of the sled and discovered that a front piece was smashed right off, and this was the only komatik their father had.

They managed to pull the komatik out of trees, straighten the load of wood, and get the dogs back on the trail, all the time wondering how they were going to tell their bed-ridden father that they had smashed the komatik and broken it.

But that was life in those days, and when they arrived home and told their story, they were not scolded. After all, everyone knew how unruly dogs could be. The komatik was quickly fixed and they were back in business in no time.

Hauling wood, hauling water



Figure 8 Selby Tucker was primarily a fisherman and spent most of his life on the water.

Dogs were confined to a pound in summer, but in the winter the dogs were free to roam. Some people built doghouses for them but if there were no doghouses, the dogs took refuge under the house, around the wood pile, or wherever they could find shelter. In the morning, after a snowstorm, they'd be seen emerging from under a snowdrift, shaking off the snow.

In those days wood was the main source of heat so everybody had a dog team. Dogs were also a great aid to hauling water from the brook to the house.

Many homes in Ship Cove didn't have plumbing until the mid-70s, so water had to be hauled by dog team from the brook to the house. Water was hauled and stored in pork barrels; the barrel would be lashed to the komatik and then hauled to the brook. There was a barrel for hauling, which was kept outside, and a barrel in the porch, in which water was stored. When it was time to get water, Selby would rattle the bucket and the dogs knew they were going to the brook to get water. "They'd get right wild," remarks Selby. The dogs knew it wasn't far to the brook, and hauling water was going to be an easy job. On the return trip the trail was often so rough that half the water would splash out, even though the barrel had been lashed down, and Selby would have to go back and fill up the barrel again. One strategy he later used to keep water from spilling over the lip of the barrel was to put clean snow on top of the water.

Feeding the team

In winter, while it fell to Selby to maintain and drive the dog team, Delilah cooked the dog food on the stove. In fishing season dogs ate raw food such as scraps of cod, capelin, sound bones, or whatever was available, but in winter, especially while hauling sleds, the dogs needed something more substantial. Dog meal was purchased from the merchant, and if there was no money for dog meal, Delilah substituted flour. They were fed once a day, in the evening.

Delilah would put the meal on the stove to cook and add capelin, seal blubber, or seal meat. When the meal was cooked it had the consistency of porridge. The hot meal was then poured into a common trough or vat for the dogs to eat.

Somebody always needed a few pups



Figure 9 Puppies...future sled dogs

When a bitch (female dog) had pups, she was separated from the pack until the puppies were older. If Selby didn't need any pups for his dog team he either gave them away or traded them; there was always somebody that wanted one or two.

On any given day

In Ship Cove, dogs were not used for racing, but if Selby was getting his team ready in the morning, Reggie Bessey, who lived down over the hill, might be getting his team ready too, and if Reggie Bessey managed to get his team on the go a little sooner than Selby he'd come up over the hill and flash by. Selby's dogs were always excited to see another team and were eager to close the distance, surging ahead whenever possible.

In Ship Cove, on any given day, you'd see teams coming in and others going out. You might look out your window and see komatiks loaded with wood, wharf sticks, logs, or pickets; whatever was needed for the day. On the bay there was plenty of room to pass a dog team, but going over the ridge the trail was only so wide and often when two teams met they'd get tangled up and there'd be a fight.

Two things were required to handle a dog team effectively: authority and strength. Most dog team drivers had a whip, which wasn't used to punish a dog, but to control it. For instance, if a dog was getting lazy, you might snap the whip alongside him and he'd begin to pull again. But if two dogs got in a fight, you would have to snap one of them to break it up. The whip had to be long enough to reach the leader in case you needed to snap a signal to her. Whips were made of rope, leather, or sealskin.

Figure 10 A braided sealskin whip used for dog teams. Whip courtesy of Bonnie Andrews.



Skinning and cooking seals

As previously mentioned, dogs hauled barrels of water from the brook to the house, and they hauled wood, but the komatiks were also used to haul heavier loads, like seals. Selby recalls bringing a frozen harp seal up from the stage and thawing it in the kitchen. A seal had to be brought indoors because in the winter it was just too cold outside. Delilah recalls how her father would bring in a seal to thaw; he'd lay it across two big pieces of board above a tub and skin the seal in the middle of the house. When she was a child, there was

no other place to thaw them; nobody had sheds back then. “Now,” says Delilah, “people have sheds that are better than what some people lived in when I was a child.”

Sealskin mittens, boots, and slippers ‘Made on the half’

Delilah remembers, “There might be fifteen or twenty seals down in the stage, frozen solid—brought in around Christmas time—that’s when they’d take up their nets, over at the back of the land, so the frozen seals were down in the stage all winter, and you had to clean them for your dogs. Then, in the spring of the year, you’d take the skins down, salt the skins and carry them to the ponds; soak them all summer, and then scrape the hair off.

“When we’d get him skinned, then we’d cut off a couple of the shoulders—especially ^{xix}bellamers—to cook. The skins would be stretched on a rack and when they were dry they’d be sent up the Straits to get skin boots, skin mittens and skin slippers made. They’d ‘make it on the half’ meaning if you sent four skins, they’d keep two for themselves and make whatever you ordered with the other two.

Selby’s mother made skin boots, complete with tucks around the toes, and ^{xx}taps.



Figure 11 Sealskin boots. Sealskin boots courtesy of Bonnie Andrews.

Repairing the komatik

Komatiks, like cars, often needed repair, but unlike cars which could be taken to a garage, Selby and Delilah remember bringing the sled indoors for repairs. Delilah says the komatik was brought into the kitchen for an hour or so to let the ice and snow thaw, then it was re-lashed if necessary, repaired, and taken out again.



Figure 12 An old komatik, photographed in Raleigh

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- ⁱ Westward to Vinland: Helge Ingstad, 1969. The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited. p. 137, para 3
- ⁱⁱ A maker or repairer of casks and barrels.
- ⁱⁱⁱ A people from the region of extreme northern Europe including northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland and the Kola Peninsula of northwest Russia. It is largely within the Arctic Circle.
- ^{iv} A member of a fishing crew who receives a stipulated proportion of the profits of a voyage rather than wages.
- ^v Belly-band: a band of leather which passes around the belly of an animal. Sometimes a thick flannel band.
- ^{vi} A long sled adopted in northern Newfoundland and especially Labrador for winter travel and hauled by dogs or sometimes men; sledge for hauling wood.
- ^{vii} A piece of wood separated or formed by splitting'; A thin piece of wood, about twelve to fourteen inches (30-36 cm) long, used chiefly as kindling.
- ^{viii} A small, iridescent deep-water fish like a smelt which, followed by the cod, appears inshore during June and July to spawn along the beaches, and is netted for bait, for manuring the fields, or dried, salted, smoked or frozen for eating.
- ^{ix} An immature seal, especially a harp seal, approaching breeding age.
- ^x A peak of ice projecting from an iceberg or 'rafted' up in an ice-floe.
- ^{xi} Widely separated one from another ... spread over a wide area.
- ^{xii} To place (an object) in a position; to set down on a surface.
- ^{xiii} A timber-tree; the trunk of a tree used for various building purposes, fuel, etc.; frequent in phrases stick of wood, and with defining words plank, wharf, etc.
- ^{xiv} A long sled, adopted in northern Newfoundland and esp Labrador for winter travel and hauled by dogs or sometimes men; sledge for hauling wood; ESKIMO SLED.
- ^{xv} enclosure for domestic animals.
- ^{xvi} A device to hinder the movement of a domestic animal or fowl; a rope to tie a cow's hind legs. A cord tying the fore leg and hind leg of an animal; also applied to the yoke of a goat; or, in the case of a fowl, a stick thrust into the breast feathers to prevent it getting through fences.
- ^{xvii} The sea-shore between high and low tide marks, washed by the sea.
- ^{xviii} A chain or rope at the front of a komatik which was thrown under the runners on a sled to slow it down on a downward slope.
- ^{xix} An immature seal, esp a harp seal, approaching breeding age
- ^{xx} Sole of a boot. Phrase: come to one's taps: to get to one's feet.