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ALASKA TRAVEL DIVISION
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FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

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by

Emmett Watson

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of camaraderie -- until they prove otherwise. Alaska-style warmth
known to students of rudimentary American geography. Size?
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Alaska is larger than New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachu-
setts, Rhode Island and Hawaii. In square miles it is larger than
any of these states -- glaciers alone. woman of 80 with the energy
of a hard-rock miner. "Welcome to Fairbanks!" she shouts at the
Alaska is a staggering litany of statistics: 586,000 sq. miles
slightest provocation. "Welcome to Alaska!"
(its base would cover Europe from Lisbon to Athens, while its top
was nudging London and Copenhagen), including 33,000 square miles
of coastline -- a rich, broad semi-continent that in its first
hundred years under the Stars and Stripes has produced a billion
dollars worth of gold and copper and countless other billions in
"I am a victim of publicity!" trumpets Eva in a high-pitched non-
stop explanation of her lofty station. "Came here from Dublin in
(350,000) than people, the world's largest mounted salmon (126
1914, traveled by boat, train and stagecoach, a widow for 36 years -
pounds), and around 17 square miles of elbow room per person. All
I have been Alaska's official hostess since 1942, when I sold some
that for \$7.2 million, a two-cent-an-acre land grab that only

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recently led Tass to complain that the Czarist government "sold Alaska for next to nothing."

Yet knowing all of this -- as most of us do -- we seem to know so little about Alaskans themselves. The modern Alaskan, the kind visitors will meet during this summer's Alaska Centennial Exposition, is still the stuff of poetry and fiction.

What the Alaska visitor encounters -- and he is almost instantly aware of it -- is a kind of uninhibited, non-nosy friendship, a willingness to accept people from the lesser 49 states as worthy of camaraderie -- until they prove otherwise. Alaska-style warmth and hospitality can, it's true, be somewhat overwhelming. Take Eva McGowan, as a ready example. It confidently can be predicted that thousands of visitors to the summer's colorful Centennial at Fairbanks will be greeted by Eva -- a woman of 80 with the energy of a hard-rock miner. "Welcome to Fairbanks!" she shouts at the slightest provocation. "Welcome to Alaska!"

Eva McGowan, you see, is Fairbanks' "official" greeter. She lives in a tiny room in Fairbanks' downtown Nordale Hotel, and until you've been greeted by Eva you aren't officially there.

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property to advantage and traveled around the world proclaiming the glories of Alaska, and the Chamber of Commerce pays me \$125 a month to greet people!"

"Welcome to Fairbanks!" she concludes, earning her salary.

There is dignity below the noise, just as there is dignity, warmth and sincerity in the friendliness of most Alaskans. Eva McGowan also symbolizes another quality in Alaskans that tends to shake up visitors -- that quality being their ever-lasting energy.

"You've got to understand how we are," a veteran Alaskan told me.

"When two guys in Seattle meet, it's just 'Hi, Joe,' and 'Hi, Pete.' But when two Alaskans meet, we have a war dance. Stick around, the social season's just beginning."

This year, the social season encompasses the entire year, stretching its glitter from the Arctic to the state's southern fjords. More than \$10 million is being invested in 41 communities just to make sure that 1967 swings.

Anchorage alone lists 91 separate events, ranging from downright fun and foolishness to serious culture, during the year-long Alaska blow-out. Cordova has scheduled a rousing Ice Worm Festival; sled dog racing is set for March in Soldotna, a Midnight Sun Festival at Nome; a rugged, 435-mile boat race will be held, as usual, on the storied Yukon River, and if you have a tendency to be late for ball games, Fairbanks will play one for your convenience on June 21 -- at midnight without lights other than natural.

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Fairbanks, like Dawson City, 40-Mile, Nome, Iditarod, Candle and Wiseman, is a place founded on gold. A proud city of 16,000, 150 miles from the Arctic Circle, with a fine newspaper called the News Miner, whose masthead proclaims: "America's Farthest North Daily Newspaper," Fairbanks is a town of culture (the University of Alaska is there) and rugged swingers, an incredible number of good-looking girls, 60 bars, a dozen service organizations, 54 churches and 110 members of Alcoholics Anonymous. A city of style and zest -- still surrounded by gold.

"Don't go near those claims," a Fairbanks bush pilot once warned a visitor. "There's still gold around here, lots of it. But they take out just enough to live, and no more than they want to pay taxes on. Just don't get too curious, because those prospectors might not like it too well."

A-67 operators, fortunately, are ready to satisfy man's curiosity about gold. Part of the Centennial will feature a unique "mining valley" exhibit, which will show how hundreds of millions in gold have been extracted from Alaska's frozen ground. A-67 officials are "salting" a mining stream with gold dust and nuggets, where, for a fee, outsiders can "pan" the ground and keep what they like.

You've heard of the "Lady of the Arctic Night?" Not to be confused with "the lady that's known as Lou," she is, nonetheless, part of Alaska's bawdy legend -- and her old home, once a great Fairbanks social center, now serves as the A-67 office, complete with bright pink wallpaper.

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Those 45 acres of A-67 grounds may not sound like much (Seattle's World's Fair was only 74), but a visitor will have all he can do -- and see. Many authentic old Fairbanks buildings have been moved to the Centennial site -- one of which will house a real going saloon, complete with a garter-sleeved, rinky-tink piano player, and a floor on which you can scuff your shoes in the sawdust.

An authentic narrow-gauge railroad will haul the footsore around the A-67 grounds, where caribou, reindeer, bison and musk ox will be roaming in a specially-fenced section of the zoo. Much has been done to preserve authenticity. Examples of native Eskimo and Indian architecture will dot the grounds; ancient Eskimo, Indian and Aleut art is being gathered by Dr. Erna Gunther, famed University of Washington anthropologist, who now heads up her own department at the U. of Alaska. From Bartlett Plaza to the Nenana, from art work to authentic Gold Rush decor and flavor -- all of it, and much more, will commemorate the day, 100 years ago, when a man named Seward sat down to do a little dealing with the Russians.

"Come early and stay late," is the way one Alaskan puts the invitation. "We've got plenty of daylight, so don't worry about the clock. You ain't seen nothing yet."

News from the State of

ALASKA

For IMMEDIATE Release

To the Chinese, the new year will be the Year of the Chicken. To Alaskans -- at least those not of Chinese descent -- the '69 summer tourist season will be the Year of the Cruise Ship. No less than eight elegant cruiseliners will sail north from California, Seattle, and Vancouver ports to Alaska this summer. In addition the State of Alaska's year-round ferryliner service will offer weekly Seattle-Alaska sailings.

Only a little more than a decade ago, salmon trollers and outboard runabouts had the waters of the Inside Passage practically to themselves. Regular, scheduled steamship service had discontinued in the mid-fifties. Summer cruises were few and becoming fewer. Getting a reservation meant writing months, perhaps a year or more, in advance.

Things have changed. This year there are so many cruise ships scheduled into the Alaska trade, oldtimers claim it will raise the water level of the North Pacific Ocean.

Here's a rundown of Alaska cruise opportunities this summer:

Alaska Cruise Lines (subsidiary of Westours, Seattle) will schedule three vessels into the trade again this summer -- the D.M.S. Polar Star, newest ship in the Westours' fleet, the S.S. Yukon Star, and the S.S. Glacier Queen. Departures May 2 through October 5 are from Vancouver with stops en route at Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway, and Haines.

American President Lines S.S. President Roosevelt -- making a single 13-day excursion called "Alaskan Midnight Sun Cruise" -- will leave Los Angeles June 9 and San Francisco June 12 en route for Seattle, Vancouver, Victoria, Ketchikan, Juneau, and return.

Canadian National's S.S. Prince George, a tradition in Alaska for years, will make 21 sailings in 1969 starting in late April and ending in early October. The George, with 265 berths, offers an itinerary which includes Vancouver, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Juneau, and Skagway.

Canadian Pacific has scheduled the Princess Patricia to duplicate her 1968 schedule with 13 regular round trips and three charters. Service begins May 31, ends with a Vancouver departure September 4. Ports of call include Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Juneau, and Skagway.

Matson Lines forecast three 14-day Alaska cruises by the S.S. Mariposa this summer. The 336-bed liner, making her initial entry into northern waters, will call at San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Victoria, Juneau, Skagway, and Sitka. Departures are July 26, August 9, and August 24 from San Francisco, a day later from Los Angeles.

Princess Cruises, Inc. will sail the Princess Italia on eight voyages, 14 days each, starting June 3. Stops include San Francisco, Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Ketchikan, Juneau, and Skagway. The vessel contains 420 beds.

The Alaska State Marine Highway System presently operates two ships per week from Seattle or Vancouver to southeast Alaska. Each Wednesday the Taku (or one of her sister ships, the Malaspina or Matanuska) carries 100 passengers Seattle-Ketchikan and continues north to the ports of Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Juneau, Haines, and Skagway. The M/V Wickersham, the state's luxurious new Norwegian-built ferryliner, departs Seattle and Vancouver on Saturdays and calls at Prince Rupert, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau, Haines, and Skagway. Come mid-May, the Wickersham will begin a summertime schedule from Prince Rupert north while a Malaspina-class vessel continues to sail from Seattle each Friday.

Total cruiseship and ferryliner sailings this summer -- a whopping 125 departures from California, Seattle, or Vancouver, with accommodations for 22,893 passengers.

It will be, Alaskans note, the biggest seaborne rush to the North since 1897 when Robert Henderson picked up a heavy bright rock in the Klondike, examined it closely, and yelled "Gold!".



THE GUN SOUNDS AT MIDNIGHT to start the raft race down the Nome River during the June 21 Nome Midnight Sun Festival. There are no entrance fees and no prizes for contestants and no admission fees for spectators -- but for spectators there is the warm satisfaction of standing high, dry, and comfortable on shore as one raft after another spills its occupants into the cool sub-Arctic waters. (Picture was taken under the midnight sun, without artificial lights.)