

Michael Patkotak - 19 years old

1st went to whale camp at 10 or 11 years old -
didn't go on boat - let him make tea & water

Graduate May '72 -

(only for big men)
Can't yet use harpoon, can use 30-pound gun
with 12 inch bomb, goes off 15 seconds later

Made of brass, Must be calm, hit in right place

Can't waste bombs, cost \$25 each

Sure nervous 1st time

Went to whale camp May 4, got whale next day
Never even put up tent, got equipment ready
made tea but never had any before chasing
after whales 3½ hours. went back for tea
and rest, went back out - 8 whales came along,
Caught up with last one, bomb didn't go off,
Captain shot whale w/ harpoon in exact spot
(cut throat) Whale died in 2 minutes, float
didn't even go out, whale was dead

When shot, whale was 4-5 feet away, Mike had
gun at ready - then gun didn't go off

Anxious to get out after another whale

Takes ½ hour to tow whale a mile - very slow towing,
slower than walking ^¾

Help came to pull whale up in ½ hour. Took 6 hours
since killing.

Small whale - yearling or so - 25 foot long, greyish-black
Share of whale - dad owns crew - keeps his share

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Dad keeps 1st front half - feeds most of town with it

Ice broke up while out there - Most of boat's share was lost

Boat & whaling gun - most important - put on sled before ice even broke up - saw it coming.

3/4 done with whale - didn't lose too many things - not too important - bedding, etc

Got things mile & half in to be safe, behind pressure ridges. Still trying to save things at last moment - Human lives valued, but they knew what they were doing

How long whaling? All the way back on both sides. Great great grand father was greatest - Now learning from uncle - looking forward to being whaler too

Billy Nealeok

Air Traffic Control Operator - bring in jets every day for FAA

Way of life is whaling - first went about 10 yrs old. Boats went out on sleds too then. Now use snow machines, don't worry about feeding dogs

Went out 15 April - terrible weather 10-15° below - hardly any water - Saw couple whales second week - Camp off point Barrow. 3-5 miles in front of military airport - 3 1/2-4 miles offshore

Takes 15 minutes from town, rough trail
 1/2 hour on slower snow machine
 Camp moved back towards town gradually with
 ice moving - move every other day or so
 Leave at last minute when ice was going - ice
 piles up 6-8 feet, lots of pressure
 Wind from E - NE - hardly any current -
 Ice didn't want to move out

May 14-15 Ice not moving much - wind still same
 but leads open periodically - current strong
 from N - NW - Camps move all over

Whales in little ponds surrounded by ice -

Come up for air - whalers wait there
 1st whale seen April 25-26 - passing through
 Whale was going in & out of ice where opening
 up - going pretty fast

Last week ice was way out open to Pt Hope -
 whales really going through 5/hour or so
 2 every half hour - just steady - follow an edge
 of ice

How many in crew? Dad, self - eight of us -
 Cook? When nothing to do - play cards, loser does
 cooking & cleaning up & make coffee
 Make eskimo donuts out there

Many crews? 3/4 crews from Barrow were there in that area
 27 crews this year - each crew has sponsor
 Captain of his crew is father Nate Nealeok

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Captainship depends on how much money you've got.

Billy will take over while parents gone inland

Take canned goods, etc - tent

Run boat out on sled with snow machine

1/4" plywood & canvas floor in tent with caribou skins nailed on that

Windbreak made for outdoor sitting - lookout

With 8 guys - some sleep early 4-5 at a time,

others stay up and watch for whales - 24 hrs a day

He comes back to work every day, goes back in evening.

Stay in a day after getting a whale, go back out again

● Current so strong it can move ice against the wind even when wind is strong