

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 3 1/2 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 1/2 hour to tow whale a mile - very slow towing,  
slower than walking <sup>3/4</sup>

Help came to pull whale up in 1/2 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

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 grandfather was greatest -

Now learning from uncle - looking forward to  
being whaler too

Billy Neakok

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 go?  
 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 on 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

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

Last week ice was worn out open to ft hope -  
Whales really going through 2/3 hour or 20  
2 went half hour - just steady - follow on edge  
of ice

How many in crew? Dad, self - ... - right of us -  
Cook? When nothing to do - play cards, laser discs  
cooking & cleaning up & make coffee  
Make extreme doubts out there  
Many crews? 3/4 crews from Gannon were there in that area  
3/4 crews this year - each crew has sponsor  
Captain of his crew is father Nate Niskol