

"Cheechacko to Sourdough"

By CPL. W. G. THURBER

An NCO gives us his views on Northern Service—the advantages and disadvantages awaiting those who "volunteer" as he did.

“**Y**ou have been selected for Northern Service” read the memo over the O.C.’s signature.

But I couldn’t be—I didn’t volunteer! However, the letter went on to inform me that not only had I been “selected” for that “plum of plums” but I was going to Eskimo Point, wherever that was.

“I’ll purchase,” I vowed, “that’s what I’ll do; they can’t do this to me. I haven’t done anything wrong—I don’t think. It must be Sergeant McGillicudy in the Orderly Room, although he was awfully pleasant to me the last time I was in Toronto on escort.”

“How soon,” queried the memo, “could this member be prepared to leave?” There was no hurry, but could he be in Toronto ready to leave for the North tomorrow night?

My dental work was not done, that could be an out, but the corporal in charge of the detachment said probably not. And so it was, that I arrived in Toronto en route North. After about three dozen needles, for everything from typhoid to athletes’ foot, I was informed that Constable Doakes had refused to go to Whitehorse, and I would be going there instead of going to Eskimo Point.

“There is at least a town there,” said Sergeant McGillicudy. Now would I kindly sign on for another three years, and oh yes, also make out my will—just in case, you know.

“Ah-h-h Jones,” said the O.C. when I was paraded before him, “how do you

like the idea of going North. Great idea. Wish I was young again.”

“But Sir, I like ‘O’ Division,” I answered full of hope.

“Nonsense man, you don’t know what you are talking about. Why there’s wine, women and adventure in the North,” he retorted.

“But, Sir, I don’t like wine, and my girl is in Timmins, and have you ever ridden on the Algoma Central, that is REAL adventure!”

“Huh,” he snorted, “sign the papers and get on your way.”

Well, the boys I knew in Toronto, saw me off, with all the exuberance of a father seeing his child go down for the third time. Of course they’d write. (The only mail I got from them, was a card the first Christmas.)

Arrival in Edmonton was as usual—no one at the station to meet me. However my home was there, so I took a taxi to it, and reported later to “K” Division Headquarters. Imagine my Mother’s surprise when I told her that I was going North for three years. Tearfully she wailed that it would probably be the last time they’d ever see me alive, I’d be buried in the North with wolves howling o’er my grave, and other encouraging thoughts. At “K” Division Headquarters they issued me with a revolver and 50 rounds—to protect myself from the wolves, they said. But they gave me two days’ leave, and with a vow that they’d never get a good “Northern” man down, I left barracks