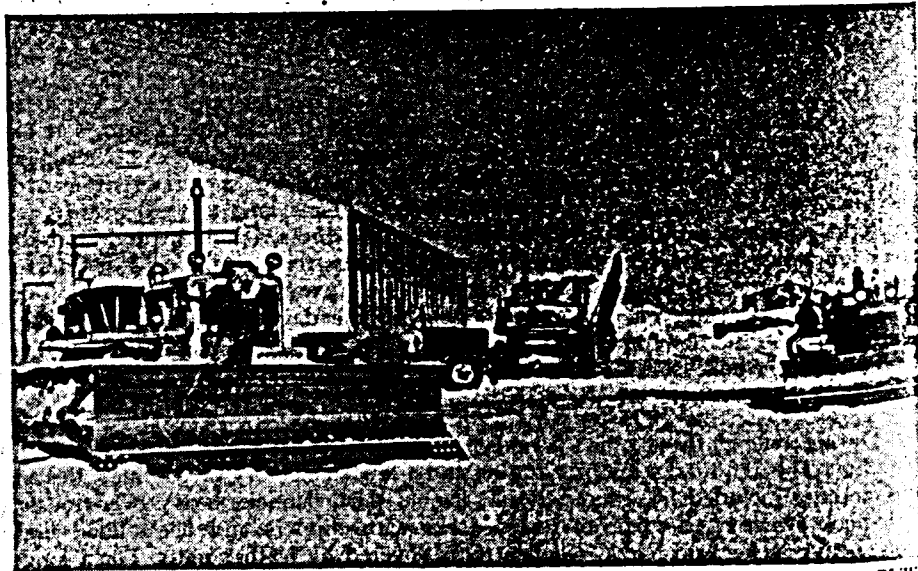


It was a strict rule that anyone leaving the immediate camp area must carry a .303 rifle as protection against the local wild life, notably polar bears, which have a tendency to lurk around the shore-line. Although polar bears are not usually a serious danger, there had been two or three attacks on men who were alone in the open. This being the Arctic Game Preserve, only Eskimos could hunt. If anyone else shoots a polar bear, even in self-defence, he may not keep any part of the animal. In the early days of the Resolute community someone did shoot a polar bear in self-defence. Being ignorant of the rules about these things, he spent many hours of free time skinning the bear. He persevered in the unaccustomed task by thoughts of a luxurious cover for the living-room floor back home. Only when the whole job was completed did he learn that his only reward would be the thanks of the RCMP—who turned the skin over to the Eskimos. Since this experience there has not been very much desire to shoot polar bears. Not only is it unrewarding, but it is difficult. According to the local experts the only way to neutralize a polar bear in a difficult situation is to shoot at what seemed an infinitesimal area at the base of his neck. "No use shooting at its head — the bullets just bounce off". Hitting that little target in the relaxation of a 25-yard range would be a hard enough job, let alone finding it in the blustering out of doors. As a final touch we were given soft-nosed and hard-nosed ammunition. Since we had no wish to shoot at each other, we did not load our rifles but tucked the rounds deep in one of the dozen pockets. The thoughts of numbed hands trying to find any bullet, soft or hard, in those pockets two seconds after seeing the rearing form of any angry polar bear was more chilling than the bitterest Arctic wind. Fortunately there were no encounters.

On our trek out toward Allen Bay we were walking diagonally into the wind. We were not cold, except for half an aching face against which the wind cut through a narrow slit of the parka. The edge of the parka quickly turned white and a cold rim of frost built up from the condensation of the breath. The dark glasses, which had to be worn everywhere out of doors in the glaring sun, became clouded. The fogging had the advantage of reducing the sun's glare, but it was a hazard when we were trying to discern detail.

Every few minutes of the way we had to pause and turn round for respite against the cutting wind. We had to stop frequently to memorize the route by the



Runway snow removal equipment at Resolute.

—Phillips