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Leuman Maurice Waugh collection - Correspondence, 1929 (Part 1)

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NY Tribune
Sunday June 16- 1929

International Press-Cutting Bureau,
51, Red Lion St., London, W.C.1.

Extract from
SCARBOROUGH POST
26 SEP 1929
Date.....

ARCTIC TOOTHACHE.

ESKIMOS COPY WHITE MAN'S HABIT.

As the Eskimo copies the white man's ways, he suffers the white man's penalties. According to Dr. L. M. Waugh, head of Columbia University Dental School, new foods and habits copied from the white man have brought toothache to the Alaskan Eskimos.

Eskimo children did not begin to suffer from toothache until their mothers started giving them molasses for dessert in place of whale oil.

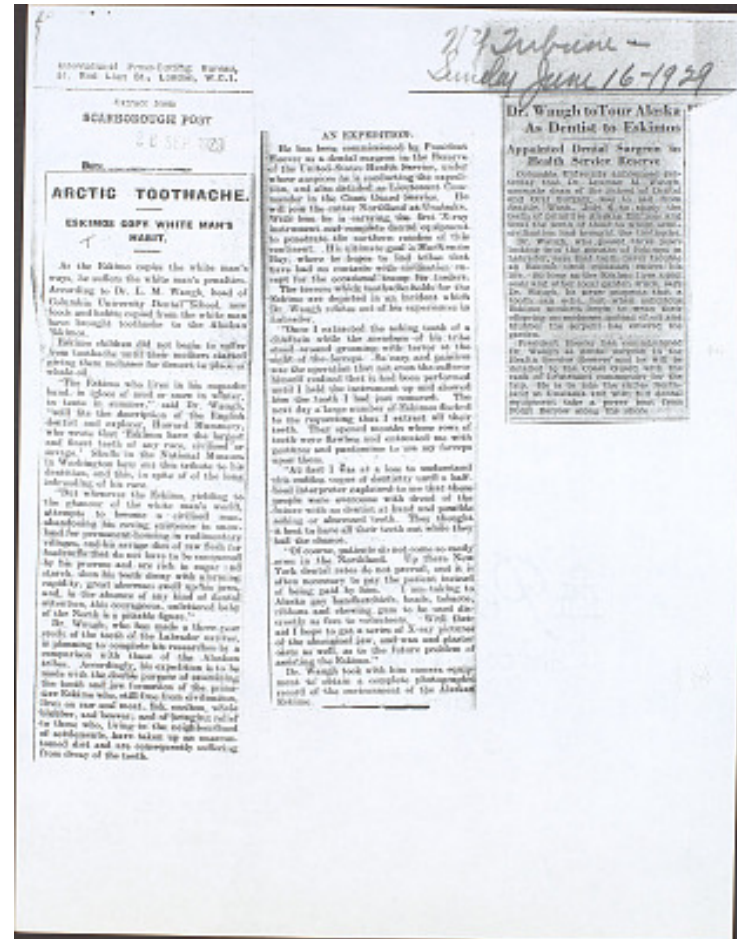
"The Eskimo who lives in his nomadic band, in igloos of mud or snow in winter, in tents in summer," said Dr. Waugh, "still fits the description of the English dentist and explorer, Howard Mummery, who wrote that 'Eskimos have the largest and finest teeth of any race, civilised or savage.' Skulls in the National Museum in Washington bear out this tribute to his dentition, and this, in spite of the long inbreeding of his race.

"But whenever the Eskimo, yielding to the glamour of the white man's world, attempts to become a civilised man, abandoning his roving existence in snowland for permanent housing in rudimentary villages, and his savage diet of raw flesh for foodstuffs that do not have to be conquered by his prowess and are rich in sugar and starch, then his teeth decay with alarming rapidity, great abscesses swell up his jaws, and, in the absence of any kind of dental attention, this courageous, unlettered baby of the north is a pitiable figure."

Dr. Waugh, who has made a three-year study of the teeth of the Labrador natives, is planning to complete his researches by a comparison with those of the Alaskan tribes. Accordingly, his expedition is to be made with the double purpose of examining the tooth and jaw formation of the primitive Eskimo who, still free from civilisation, lives on raw seal meat, fish, caribou, whale blubber, and beaver; and of bringing relief to those who, living in the neighbourhood of settlements, have taken up an unaccustomed diet and are consequently suffering decay of the teeth.

AN EXPEDITION

He has been commissioned by President Hoover as a dental surgeon in the Reserve of the United States Health Service, under whose auspices he is conducting the expedition, and also detailed as Lieutenant Commander in the Coast Guard Service. He will join the cutter Northland at Unalaska. With him he is carrying the first X-ray instrument



and complete dental equipment to penetrate the northern reaches of this continent. His ultimate goal is MacKenzie Bay, where he hopes to find tribes that have had no contacts with civilisation except for the occasional tramp fur traders.

The terrors which toothache holds for Eskimo are depicted in an incident which Dr. Waugh relates out of his experiences in Labrador.

"Once I extracted the aching tooth of a chieftain while the members of his tribe stood around groaning with terror at the sight of the forceps. So easy and painless was the operation that not even the sufferer himself realised that it had been performed until I held the instrument up and showed him the tooth I had just removed. The next day a large number of Eskimos flocked to me requesting that I extract all their teeth. They opened mouths whose rows of teeth were flawless and entreated me with gestures and pantomime to use my forceps upon them.

"At first I was at a loss to understand this sudden vogue of dentistry until a half-bred interpreter explained to me that these people were overcome with dread of the future with no dentist at hand and possible aching or abscessed teeth. They thought it best to have all their teeth out while they had the chance.

"Of course, patients do not come so easily even in the Northland. Up there New York dental rates do not prevail, and it is often necessary to pay the patient instead of being paid by him. I am taking to Alaska gay handkerchiefs, beads, tobacco, ribbons and chewing gum to be used discreetly as fees to volunteers. With their aid I hope to get a series of X-ray pictures of the aboriginal jaw, and wax and plaster casts as well as to the future problem of assisting the Eskimo.

Dr. Waugh took with him camera equipment to obtain a complete photographic record of the environment of the Alaskan Eskimo.

Dr. Waugh to Tour Alaska As Dentist to Eskimos
Appointed Dental Surgeon in Health Service Reserve

Columbia University announced yesterday that Dr. Leuman M. Waugh, associate dean of the School of Dental and Oral Surgery, was to sail from Seattle, Wash., July 6 to study the teeth of primitive Alaskan Eskimos and treat the teeth of those to whom semi-civilization had brought the toothache.

Dr. Waugh, who passed three years looking into the mouths of Eskimos in Labrador, says that teeth never trouble an Eskimo until molasses enters his life. So long as the Eskimo lives upon seals and other local garden truck, says Dr. Waugh, he never suspects that a tooth can ache, but when solicitous Eskimo mothers begin to wean their offspring on molasses instead of oil and blubber the serpent has entered the garden.

President Hoover has commissioned Dr. Waugh as dental surgeon in the Health Service Reserve and he will be detailed to the Coast Guard with the rank of lieutenant commander for the trip. He is to join the cutter Northland at Unalaska and with full dental equipment take a power boat from Point Barrow along the shore.

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