

Traveling the road rough as miners' hands,
 We turn off the engine to watch
 One, two snowy owls ride the air
 Like white smoke over the tundra.
 A young porcupine huddles under a willow.
 At the next rise, Tangle Lakes shine like
 New coins or maybe moons fallen from Jupiter
 In homage to this midnight sun.
 After a blueberry and grayling breakfast
 A snow smell blows into camp.
 Quickly we tie the canoe to the car top
 In a rush to outrun the blizzard.

Tangle Lakes, Denali Highway

Norwegian men—eyes glacial blue,
 Blond hair burned white by sun,
 Shoulders built to ship strength—
 Sluiced and dredged Nome's gold
 Then wintered at these hot springs.
 Nearby in wilderness coves stand raven,
 Orca, eagle totems. In the strait a pod
 Of orcas stampede seals to shore.
 Rocks tumble in the crimson tide.

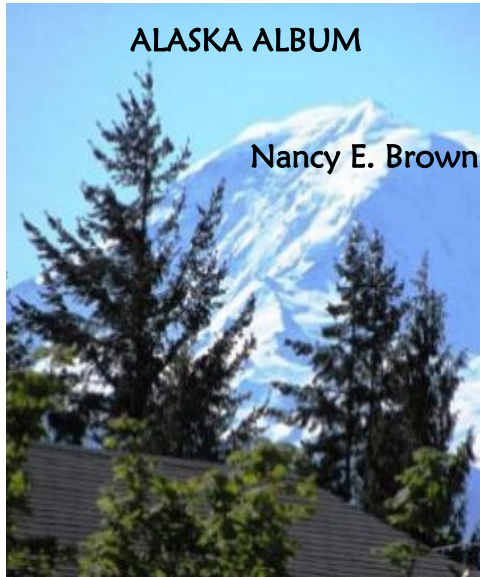
Tenakee Springs, Chichagof Island

We read the shallow rivers—
 Wet maps of boulders and sandbars—
 Until we bank our boat at Aggie Creek.
 At midnight Martin Olson glides his Super Cub
 Onto the sandbar for coffee at our fire.
 Bang! Pop! Bang! We duck and stare.
 Martin laughs, there are abandoned oil drums.
 Pop! As temperatures drop like the sun's arc
 Beyond black spruce silhouettes against
 A char-pink sky. Late light
 Lingers behind the Bendelebens.

Aggie Creek, Seward Peninsula

Tanana River—a rumble of driftlogs, oxbows—
 Heavy with silt the color of goose eggs—
 Hauls its glacial load past the mouth
 Of the Goodpaster, the river never seen
 By the Kentucky family bearing its name.
 Up the Goodpaster delphiniums bloom,
 Planted long ago at a trapper's cabin
 Now collapsed into earth on a bluff
 Above the beavers that build
 A new lodge on an old oxbow.

Goodpaster River, Delta Junction



ALASKA ALBUM

Nancy E. Brown

*Dedicated to the memory of Milli Ekak
 who served me whale meat and muktuk
 and taught me to play 'Hearts,'
 to the memory of my son Jason B. Brown
 who took his first steps
 on St. Lawrence Island,
 and especially to my husband Ken Brown
 and daughter Roda L. Motta
 who share many of the memories
 and stories in these poems
 about our former home.*

Gambell, St. Lawrence Island

Duffles drop on the floor before
 Milli, my children, and I hustle
 To where spring ice clings to the shore.
 A whale's blood path
 Marks the way to flensing—
 One foot in the oomiak
 The other on the whale's back.
 Alarm: a small boy toddles off the ice.
 Splash! Snap, a gaff grabs his parky.
 That night, dancing at the school,
 Aieee! Tong!Tong! Walrus-hide drums.
 Later, hands join hands, join hands
 To reach home through forty-mile winds
 Blowing snow from Siberia.

Please recycle to a friend.

WWW.ORIGAMIPOEMS.COM
 email us at:
 origamipoems@gmail.com

Cover Photo by Maureen Conley

Origami Poetry Project™

ALASKA ALBUM
 Nancy E. Brown © 2010

