



# Alas! Alaska: Are You Kidding? I'm Not Going.

*Marilyn Walters Sugarman*

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What would you do if you were told you had to move to Alaska for the next three years? What would you say to a moose who wandered into your backyard? How far would you chase your runaway dog in -65° below weather? Have you ever used a plaid sports jacket as drapery to block out the bright midnight sun? If you are bowling and an earthquake knocks down all your pins, does it count as a strike?

Alas! Alaska is not the usual thrilling true-adventure narrative associated with the wilderness of our forty-ninth state. It does not concern itself with scaling mountains, stalking bear, catching upstream salmon, or flying with bush pilots into uncharted regions. My story is less wilderness survival and more real life survival. How could our family be uprooted from our comfortable Virginia home and live in an igloo in Alaska? There is no question that people are interested in reading about Alaska. But this story is different. Compiled from actual letters mailed to friends back home, Alas! Alaska is a unique book about an Air Force family's three-year tour in Alaska, written from the point of view of a more than slightly reluctant Air Force wife whose heel marks from coast to coast are still visible. It is zany, irreverent, and true. In addition to painting an accurate picture of life in the Great North, it will make you laugh out loud. Chapter One starts with our arrival in Anchorage with its accompanying first impressions, mostly disagreeable, from the inadequate housing accommodations to the introductions of our alcoholic yet friendly neighbors. You will discover the unforgettable characters and unusual customs - - first-hand observations of natural phenomena such as the Midnight Sun, pitch-dark wintry days and sunlit summer nights; earthquakes and tremors; mountains and glaciers; subzero temperatures; and the Northern Lights. Gradually, I, the unwilling housewife, grudgingly accept the fact that I am snowbound for three years and adopt the "if you can't beat 'em join 'em" attitude. Now, snowmobile outings, sledding parties at twenty below, and camping trips during a monsoon were my new norm. Meanwhile, my husband, a Captain who has convinced himself that he is a Brigadier General, is bungling his way through Arctic Survival, or "Cool School", and fighting the enemy - the inevitable military red tape. Only our three sons seem capable of adjusting, as they insist on viewing everything with excitement from the State Fair with its 60 lb. cabbages to Fur Rendezvous, the winter carnival whose main attraction is not the animal pelts but the unshaven fur-faced prospectors. Each of the eight chapters delves further into our family's misadventures, from avoiding clashes with knife-wielding neighbors to chasing moose and playing Bingo with the Eskimos. Alas! Alaska is not only informative, but more fun than eating hot mooseburgers at the ex-governor's rained-out picnic. Sooner or later it will tickle your funny bone like a walrus' whiskers.

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