



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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One fourth of the residents of the Pribilof islands are now minus their tonsils as a result of a two-week visit by a medical mission which has now returned to the United States.

Dr. William A. Morgan, Washington ear, nose, and throat specialist, who headed the three-man mission to the famed fur seal islands in the Bering sea, reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today that he had performed tonsilectomies on 104 Aleut youngsters during the course of the visit.

The mission went to the Pribilofs under the auspices of the Fish and Wildlife Service, which controls the sealing operations there. Members of the mission served without compensation.

Considerable improvisation was necessary in order to perform the operations successfully, Dr. Morgan reported. Hospital facilities are available on both St. Paul and St. George islands but in neither case were extensive enough for handling more than a few patients at a time. In addition, a portion of the medical equipment on the island prior to the evacuation of the natives to the mainland had been removed during their absence and not yet replaced.

With the help of the resident physician and nurse on St. Paul island, the largest room available was converted into an 18-bed ward by using left-over Army cots. Not enough sheets were on hand and native women were enlisted to wash and sterilize sheets as rapidly as possible.

Beginning early in the morning of the second day on St. Paul, Dr. Morgan performed 18 operations -- the capacity of the ward. Seven hours later, the young patients -- some of whom were only two years old -- were wrapped in blankets, picked up by their fathers, and taken home in a truck. Dr. Morgan then began a second series of 18 operations, ending at a little after mid-night -- still daylight in the Pribilofs in July. The following two days 27 additional operations were performed.

A week later the group moved to St. George, the smaller of the two main islands, and 41 children had their tonsils removed. No complications developed in any of the cases, Dr. Morgan said, except occasional bleeding.

The other members of the mission were Dr. Roy Lyman Sexton, a specialist in internal medicine, and Dr. R. K. Thompson, a dentist. Dr. Sexton made a survey

of the general medical facilities on the islands. The teeth of many of the natives, Dr. Thompson found, were in poor condition and samples of the local water were brought back to the United States for tests which will determine whether it is responsible for the decayed teeth.

While in Seattle, on their way back to Washington, the doctors arranged for shipment of ten million units of penicillin to the islands for use this winter if pneumonia cases should develop. Arrangements were also made for the transfer to a sanatorium on the Alaskan mainland of the few active tuberculosis cases on the islands.

Dr. Morgan, in his report, stated that the general health of the natives was excellent and that he had never seen a better cared for native group.

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