

# THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

NORMA E. SMITH

I am the highway!  
I am the girdle  
Binding the hemispheres  
Conceived in the brain  
Of the Ancient of Days,  
Hidden millenniums  
In secret places,  
Under the mountains,  
Under the forests,  
Under the snows,  
Under the ices  
Of ages successive.

I am the highway!  
In the fulness of time  
I appeared at God's orders  
Whispered to men  
Whose ears were attentive,  
Attuned to His power  
Who saw me unwinding  
Into their dreams  
Ere the first axe  
Laid low the first hemlock.

Men of the Northlands,  
Resourceful and visionful!

I am the highway!  
I murmured in wheels  
Of lorries and derricks,  
Whistled in axe strokes  
Sang in the voices  
Of men as they sweated,  
Pulling and chopping,  
Tearing and clearing,  
Using their instruments  
Monsters of wood  
Of steel and of chromium,  
Lengthening, widening,  
And the high spruce trees  
Fell with the fir trees.

Toiling men, weary men  
Sleeping in cabins  
While outside the tempests  
Muted my music,  
Roughened my surface,  
Daunted my makers  
Until the white star  
Of the morning came over.  
Think of the spirit  
With which they constructed me  
As white wings and grey wings  
Flashed paths for more wings.

Slowly but surely  
I've cradled the rivers  
Tucked blue-eyed lakes  
In the curve of my elbow,  
Caressed the bald heads  
Of the rugged-faced Rockies  
Revealing the beauty  
Of two noble countries,  
Vastness and narrowness  
Pasture and mountainside  
Prairie and hilltop.

Wheels, wings and waters  
Turning and soaring,  
Winding and twisting,  
Above and below,  
Onward and upward,  
Forward and southward,  
Eastward and westward,  
Encompassing, holding  
Two nations in amity  
In close communion  
In a true brotherhood.

I am the highway!  
Wedding two continents,  
Unfolding the bud  
Of the many-leaved Future!