

## Warren's body recovered in the spring

While the death of a parent is to be expected, the loss of a brother is another matter altogether. On Oct. 22, 1939, Warren and Logan Varnell were driving on the ice of the Kotzebue lagoon. They had run rope to the Ferguson tug, the *Helen Lee*, and were trying to pull it ashore. Suddenly

the truck went through the ice. The truck sank 15 feet and both men came out, clawing for the surface against the tide. Fortunately for Varnell, there were some Eskimos nearby at the time. One of them, Duffy Henry, could clearly see Varnell's shadowy, struggling

figure through a section of clear ice and pounded an escape hole open with a two-by-four. Varnell came out of the water and dove back through the hole made by the truck looking for Warren.

But Warren was gone, swept under the rougher ice where his struggles could not be seen. Warren could not have lasted long under the ice. It was so cold within minutes of coming out of the water, Varnell's clothing became so frozen they had to be sawed off his body.

Though Archie was able to retrieve the truck, Warren's body could not be found before the hole in the ice froze closed. Knowing if the corpse could not be retrieved before spring it would drift out to sea with the shore fast ice, Archie put out a \$100 reward for retrieval of the body. The next spring, Harold Brown recovered the corpse by stretching some nets across the mouth of

the lagoon slightly below the level of the ice. When Warren's body drifted by, Brown was able to snag it.

Warren was sorely missed by the residents of Kotzebue. Unlike Archie, he was trusted in Kotzebue. He was a sharp businessman but without Archie's infamous conniving streak. Even so, recalled Shafsky, Warren was "just as neurotic and just as crazy as Archie." The Eskimos particularly liked Warren and gave him the affectionate nickname "Ongooporuk" (sic) which fit him perfectly because of his size, body shape and warmth of personality. The Inupiat term (sic) term meant "bossy little man" or "little boss man."

Warren's death may have also created both a financial windfall and a curse for Archie. Warren was an astute money-handler and at the time of his death, the Fergusons had accumulated an empire estimated by Little at an amazing \$7 million. But Warren's death created a major problem for Archie. Warren had three children -- Don, Ray and Frank -- and an undependable wife. Archie immediately moved to Kotzebue from Selawik permanently and established the three boys in his house where he and Hadley raised them as his sons, adopting the "Eskimo style," i.e. with no paperwork.

Warren's wife, Minnie,

in the words of Kotzebue Bush pilot John Cross, then went to Fairbanks, where she "made a fool of herself." She worked at the Wonder Bar Cafe in Fairbanks for years before returning to Kotzebue where, in 1991, she was living in the Senior Citizens Center.

Minnie's lack of a grip on reality was apparently a lifelong affliction. In 1990, she told this author Warren "committed suicide" and she and Warren had "five children: three boys and a girl." One of Warren's grandchildren, Hadley Hess, responded to Minnie's comments by saying she was "crazy" and the fact had been well-known for quite a while by the rest of the family.

For Archie, the awful string of deaths must have been devastating. In a period of four years he lost a son, a brother, both parents and acquired responsibility for three boys, the oldest one, Don, being four years old.

But even in Warren's death, Archie managed to find a silver cloud. For years afterwards, any time one of his pilots asked for a raise, Archie would unroll a long, tearful story of how Warren died with "thousands of dollars" in his pocket, money which was never recovered and how he, Archie, was still struggling to recover from the terrible loss. Archie was still using this excuse as late as the 1950's, almost 20 years after Warren's death.

But then again, it was Archie's nature to do anything to create confusion. He never told anyone his birth year and was equally as reluctant to tell anyone his middle name. For years, one of his mechanics, Ed Yost, tried to find out what the "R" in Archie's middle name stood for. Whenever he asked Archie, Archie would give him a strange look as if the middle name was something exotic or embarrassing, a name like Rupert or Ringermorton. All Archie would ever say was the "R" of his middle name was the same as his father's, F.R.

While Archie may have been able to insinuate he had a name of which to be ashamed, his pilot's certificate revealed nothing exotic at all. The "R" stood for "Robert." But for years, Yost called Archie by a middle name he concocted to fit the letter R: Rustguard.

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## Creative activities

By Georgiana Moto  
Special to the Tundra Times

Where I'm from which is Deering, we travel to other villages or go hunting and you have to know the trail if you want to go anywhere.

Some people don't know the direction of places and so people, for instance elderly men who know the trail to places go out and bring tree branches, pieces of long sticks and reflecting tape along and they mark the trail and they put on the reflections.

Their called stakes. (They're called stakes.) They help a lot.

The City League basketball team travels to other villages by snowmachine and they sometimes travel in the dark and so the piece of reflection tape helps a lot so they can see the steak. The rides would be long, hard, bumpy, cold and boring, so I use to just count

the steaks, just count, count, count, and so on and so on. But they tell you which direction to go. They help so much that I can even travel someplace myself without getting lost. This is what they look like:



Editor's note: The 12 year old author is a sixth grade student at Inlet View Elementary School in Anchorage. She was Student of the Month for Dec. She and her mother Marlene Moto travel frequently by snow machine.

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... Warren was  
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nicknamed  
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- Monday, April 5
  - General Public Comment
  - Status of Regional Advisory Council Member Recommendations
  - Review Statewide and Fish/Shellfish Proposals for change to 1993-94 seasons and bag limits for Federal Subsistence Regulations
  - Reconsideration of Rainbow Trout in Kuskokwim Bay drainages
- Tuesday, April 6
  - Review Wildlife Proposals Southeast, Southcentral
- Wednesday, April 7
  - Review Wildlife Proposals Kodiak/Alutians, Bristol Bay, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior
- Thursday, April 8
  - Review Wildlife Proposals Seward Peninsula, Northwest Arctic, Eastern Interior, North Slope