

Emily Brown Wins Scholarship

FAIRBANKS — Mrs. Emily Ivanoff Brown, one of Alaska's best-known Eskimo writers, has been awarded a \$2,422 scholarship by the Woman's National Farm & Garden Association to carry on her various writing projects.

"We feel honored to have a woman of your ability as one of the association's scholarship winners," wrote Mrs. Frederick G. Garrison, president of the association, to Mrs. Brown.

Concerned that the history and ways of her people would one day be forgotten, Mrs. Brown turned to writing as a means of preserving a unique culture.

Her subject is "everything to do with Eskimo life" — legends, music, songs, food, customs. And she is writing about her own life, as the daughter of a half-Russian father and full Eskimo mother, born at Unalakleet and raised at Shaktoolik.

Mrs. Brown decided early on a teaching career and taught briefly at Kotzebue following her graduation from Chemawa Indian School at Salem, Oregon in 1928. But she subsequently gave up her career plans to marry Robert Brown. After his death, and with three sons to support, she returned to the classroom in 1938 and taught throughout northern Alaska over the next 30 years.

Beginning in 1951, she went to school every summer to work for the college degree she had always wanted, and in 1964 it was finally hers, awarded by the University of Alaska.

"I didn't like my titles," she explained. "I was called an instructional aide, not a real teacher, and I wanted to be a teacher in name too."

While teaching on the Arctic Slope, she began writing down the Eskimo folk tales her mother had told her — because the children in school "were sick of hearing about Dick and Jane."

Later, when she was teaching at Kotzebue, she helped to organize the first public library. She wrote a booklet on the legends of Kotzebue and donated proceeds from its sale to the library.

Following her retirement in 1968, she came to the university as a BIA counselor "to welcome native students, to let them know there were others of their kind on campus."

Then she became a student again and resumed her writing. Now, in addition to writing, the 69-year-old grandmother works



ESKIMO WRITER WINS SCHOLARSHIP — Mrs. Emily Ivanoff Brown has been awarded \$2,422 scholarship by Woman's National Farm & Garden Association to help finance her writings on Eskimo history and culture. In addition to writing, Mrs. Brown serves as part-time hostess at University of Alaska's new Wood Center on Fairbanks campus. (UA photo)

part-time as a hostess in the new William Ransom Wood Campus Center, guiding visitors through the building.

Honors have come her way in recent years. For her long-time effort to preserve the cultural heritage of her people, Mrs. Brown in 1970 was presented a Presidential Commendation from President Nixon honoring her for "exceptional service to others, in the finest American tradition."

The same year, the university's Alumni Association honored her as its Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, and the Journalism Department named a new writing scholarship for her.

The Emily Ivanoff Brown writing award is the gift of Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ira Harkey, a visiting professor of journalism at the university in 1968-69, who requested that the scholarship be named for an Alaskan native writer.