

# Sincerity Is Shortcut To Cooperation

(Editor Howard Rock's comments to Public Health Service Workshop at the University of Alaska on October 14, 1966.)

Someone gave me a tough assignment and that is to try and tell you how to communicate with our Native people in the State. How does one do it? I'm far from being sure myself but, partly from my desire to get out of it, I would like to tell you some things I used to do as a youngster at Point Hope communicating with white people.

During my childhood, there were very few people in my village who talked English. At the time, I had managed to learn a few little sentences like, "How are you?, I don't know, Come here, please, No sir, Yes sir," and a few more little brief ones. I took great pride in using them every chance I got. Most

(Continued on Page 2)

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(Continued from Page 1)

of the time was when the famous old Revenue Cutter Bear came to Point Hope each year.

When most of the elder folks came face to face with the Cutter sailors, they communicated mostly by sign language. I was different. I said things like "Hello, sir" and got immediate response and the response was almost always spontaneous and happy. More than once I heard things like, "Hey fellers, this boy speaks English!" As soon as some sailors said this, I was surrounded by others who said a lot of things I didn't understand. They asked a lot of questions and the answers I gave usually turned out to be wrong ones but the sailors didn't care. They were highly amused and laughed a great deal and I laughed with them. We got along fine.

That was communication as imperfect as it may have been but communication nevertheless.

This little episode I told is not trying to tell you that if you go out in the field you should know some Eskimo or Indian language although the idea might not be bad at all. When you go out there, you will find that just about everyone will understand your language. Sign language is largely obsolete now because the folks have learned a great deal of English. I think that is a pretty good achievement in itself. They, generally, have learned a foreign language within the span of a hundred years.

There are other ways of communicating, of course. I don't know much about them at all but I know they are much harder than what I did as a child. I suppose some of them would be in the category of "Esprit de Corps" sort of thing — a sort of arriving at a togetherness atmosphere.

For us, I'm talking about the Eskimos whom I know best, sincerity has always been an easy thing to identify — sincerity that is not artificial — a will to do something that emanated from somewhere in the heart area. One of the ways to arrive at this, I believe, would be to do the work you set out to do with the help of the people for whom the job is aimed. Working together for a common goal is the shortcut to achievement men make. On the basis of this, you should be able to find cooperation — good, happy kind of cooperation from our people if you have genuine will to work for them and they, in turn, will work for you.