



UA Photograph By SABRA McCracken

Ticasuk did it again —

Emily Ivanof Brown earns third University degree

By P.M. IVEY

FAIRBANKS, May 11 - Emily Ivanof Brown, Ticasuk, patted the red rose corsage her son, Melvin, had sent to her, pinned near the shoulder of her commencement gown. Then she took her place in line with the other 1980 University of Alaska, Fairbanks graduates. Ticasuk was no stranger to the UAF commencement march. She had marched in that line before.

The graduates took their seats in the Patty Gym and the Choir of the North sang "Alleluia." Everyone who knew Emily Brown shortly knew how prophetic that song was.

Chancellor Howard Cutler came forward to the podium to deliver his commencement address. After his opening remarks, he paused, eyes scanning the

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assemblage. Something was coming.

The Chancellor began again, pride discernible in his voice.

"Among the members of the graduating class is an individual whose record at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks is so unique that it warrants special mention. Emily Ivanof Brown first enrolled at the Fairbanks campus for the 1954 summer sessions. Since that time, she has been enrolled at the University during every year, except 1955.

"At the age of 60, she earned her first baccalaureate degree, Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education. At the age of 69, she earned the Master of Arts degree in Communication Arts.

"Now, at the young age of 76, she has completed the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in Inupiaq Eskimo. It would be difficult to match the contributions made by Emily over the years while she has been a student at the University of Alaska.

"She has written extensively about her Native heritage, anxious to preserve as much of the history of her people as possible. Her most recent project has been her involvement in the production of a dictionary for her own Malemute dialect of the Inupiaq Eskimo language.

"The completion of this degree does not signify the end of Emily Brown's contributions, however. She has already lined up her next teaching project, which will be the development of a curriculum guide for teaching the Inupiaq Eskimo language and culture in



EMILY IVANOF BROWN ACKNOWLEDGES APPLAUSE — UA Photograph By SARA McCRACKEN

elementary school."

The audience and graduates waited. Chancellor Cutler leaned across the podium and said, "Emily Ivanof Brown, will you please stand up?"

Applause crashed through the silence as the tiny figure rose up, beaming. She waved her hand and said, "Here I am, everybody!"

And indeed she was there — on a pass from Fairbanks Memorial Hospital especially to attend her third graduation. A semester's hard work — enough for any two 20-year-olds to give up in exhaustion — had finally taken its toll on Emily and it was time for her to rest a little.

"But not for long," Emily said. "I still have much work to do."

Emily Brown's life has been filled with accomplishments, personal honors and awards almost beyond number, from "Best Primary Teacher of the North" in 1929 from the Department of Education after one year's teaching at Kotzebue, to a Presidential Commendation from Richard Nixon "for outstanding service to others in the finest Amer-

ican tradition."

As an author and journalist, she was twice awarded a "49-er certificate" from the Alaska Press Club as an outstanding pioneer journalist for her writings about Eskimo culture and history. In 1974, she was named "Woman of the Year" by the National Federation of Press-Women, an award she shared with Kathryn Graham of the *Washington Post*.

To promote and preserve her Eskimo culture, Emily Brown has written many articles and books. The most notable was her master's thesis, "Grandfather of Unalakleet," now being reprinted under the title of *Roots of Ticasuk* by Alaska Northwest Publishing Company for release sometime this year.

She has also written down all the songs and stories that her mother and other relatives told her, enough for three book-length manuscripts: *Authentic Eskimo Legends and Folktales*; *The Longest Story Ever Told* (Yayag); *The Magical Man*, and Eskimo book of songs in Inupiaq Eskimo, with the phonetic pronunciations and

English translations.

Emily is now working on an Eskimo encyclopedia which she hopes will be part of a set of volumes, one for each Alaska Native group.

As founder and acting chairman of the Alaska Heritage Writers Association, Emily Brown initiated the Eskimo lamp project that culminated in a large, eternal-flame stone and brass lamp constructed on the UA Fairbanks campus near the Lower Commons, so "Native students can have a little bit of home and not be so lonesome." She also dreams of having

a multicultural center built on her beloved campus, "to serve as a beacon for my people."

Emily taught in rural Alaska villages for thirty years and was more than once, nurse, postmistress and preacher at funerals in addition to her teaching duties. Often, she endured great personal hardships to maintain her high standards in the classroom, both as a teacher and as a student. The awards and honors she received for her work were always a surprise to her. More than once her acceptance speeches began,

"I don't know why I am being honored. I didn't do anything!"

When Emily Brown marched through the faculty line after the May 11 commencement, it took her twice as long as the other students to get through that line. Nearly all the faculty stopped her for a hug or to shake her hand in congratulations.

Then she wore her cap and gown back to the hospital to show the nurses so they wouldn't feel left out.

Emily Ivanof Brown, Ticasuk, gives her love, compassion, humanity and knowledge to everyone who accepts it. She teaches those who do that education is important; that each one is somebody; and — with a little help from God — anyone can accomplish anything, if they work hard enough.