

Happenings I Never Want to Forget

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From the time I begin to realize, there are just many many things too precious to be forgotten. But the need was so great, to find a way to keep them without forgetting. So the knowing of writing was a very bright and promising answer. How beautiful the letters appear as I begin to see them in school, but they were pretty tricky, to learn them good and fast. I was a slow one in school.

Reading and writing in English came to our island home at the time of my grandfather, around year 1902. So my father and that generation were first children to go to school. And it was my generation that first went to high school. And of course the ones after me always were going to B.I.A. high schools. Now our children are in colleges! College was something too great for me even to try. When I think about it I never have a hope to reach that high, although I wanted very much to get something like that. And as Eskimo was never a written language, reading and writing was a new discovery for an Eskimo. As there are many traditional customs and dos and don'ts if not performed rightly, may bring curse, in Eskimo land. So to learn to read and write is both important and beautiful, in every way. Many many thanks to the brave school teachers. I can say that, for later when I went out to the main land and to some cities. I see what nice things there are in many of their places. Yet those school teachers came out to my island home, so isolated and in the ice more months of the year than we have summer. And those tall white people are different than us. They must have miss their nice garden foods, as I have fallen in love with them later myself. I even became a vegetarian some years, when I was out in school and work, from the years 1942-1949. I was going places so far, from my home on the island then. But now it is not as great an adventure as it use to be. But for an Eskimo, writing is a precious treasure. And as Eskimo was never a written language. They are doing some on this, but is far from many of us yet. It was my grandfather's time when school first started here on my island home, in early 1900s. So this 20th century is another happening for our people here on our island home, as this time the schools begin. And it is such a wonderful event.

Before this century, our forefathers have never seen a white man. All we know were Eskimo with all the supernatural powers to live by.

So, the knowledge we get from the schools we have now, is just great so great. In fact, I want to be in school all the time, now. There is so much put up so nicely and orderly by a white man from different race. I like my white neighbor.

The school teachers from the time of our first to stay for winter, Mr. and Mrs. Vern Gambell to the time of our B.I.A. teachers in our day now are, Cambells, Tubertises, Troutments, Thompsons, Smithes, Grahams, Daughertys, Reeds, Feathereses, Odeals, Hargraveses, Benetens and now there are two families to stay for winter or two sometimes. There have been so many couples come for a school year and go. And the new ones come more and more often now. We even have Native school teachers from here now, like Mr. Anders Apassingok. There also are aides, Susan Campbell, Leonard Nawpakhok and Ila May James, all from here. They are teaching in a big modern school building. It is the third building, where Gambell people go to school. The first was built around 1890s. Now our fourth class city is named after the first teacher, Gambell, how beautiful it appears. Now we even have Eskimo language teachers. They just have been starting on writing our Eskimo language.

It was the year 1923 when I first wake up to the world. Down through the ages, there have been many many precious memories, just plain happenings, that pass on and on.

TO BE CONTINUED