

Unique Gift Enhances Christmas

The meaning of Christmas was enhanced at Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage through a unique gift given by several of the patients there.

Fourteen persons, ranging in age from 12 years to 108, joined in a project to share with the readers of the Anchorage Daily News their memories of Christmas festivities in their home villages.

In October, Arnie (Mrs. David) Hickok, a volunteer in the effort, began to gather the stories, drawings and poems. A few were actually written by the patients themselves.

Others were dictated to Mrs. Hickok who was most careful to keep the exact wording and flavor of the telling. She also prepared a short background sketch on each author or artist.

The information specialist for Alaska Native Health Area photographed all the participants and April Johnson, editor of the NEWS Sunday Magazine section, arranged them all for the

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special Christmas presentation.

Some patients already had gone back home by the time the project was completed. Others had to spend their holiday at the Center away from family and close friends.

Traditionally, the people in Anchorage have prepared treats and entertainments for those hospitalized at this and other seasons.

These stories and other contributions by the patients were in small measure a sharing of Christmas with the community.

The nature of this special gift will go far beyond the initial publication, for the glimpse of village life will be cherished by readers who have little knowledge of these old or distant customs but who have much appreciation for Native life and ways.

Those who contributed to the project and their home villages are: Daniel Alowa, Savoonga; John Nevak, Bethel, Simon Pilot, Nulato; Thomas Sheppard, Mountain Village;

Marfa Fratis, St. Paul Island, Pribilofs; Jessie Lee, Kotzebue; Chatherine Moses, Allakaket; Bert Patterson, Noorvik; Josephine Smith, Belkofsky; Jacob Stalker Jr., Kotzebue;

Dorothy Epchook, Kwethluk; Joseph Seton, Hooper Bay; Ellen Wells, Fort Yukon; and Minnie Tucker, originally of Rocky Point (near Golovin) but who now lives in Fairbanks.