

# Guardisman teaches respect to his 18 children

by Barbara Crane

Tundra Times reporter

It really doesn't matter what topic Wilfred Lane is discussing. Eventually the conversation turns to his belief in the power of discipline, respect and pride.

Lane was born 49 years ago in the tiny village of Point Hope, above the Arctic Circle on a point of land jutting out into the Chukchi Sea.

In Point Hope he learned some lasting lessons about respect and discipline.

"People all around had respect for each other," Lane said. "And people's property was respected by others. Nobody would touch something if it belonged to some other person."

Lane believes that people are brought up differently now and that their sense of discipline has faded away.

"In my day, my parents would spank me if I played rough and made someone else cry, or if I broke something, and that was good," he said. "I wasn't a bad boy, but I did get into mischief."

At the time, he thought his parents didn't love him, but now he says he appreciates what they were doing.

"I am what I am now because my parents did love me enough to discipline me," he said. "I look back on that they did for me, and I wish I could do that for my kids, too."

Lane went to grade school in Point Hope, but left home to attend high school at a boarding school in Mount Edgecumbe in Southeastern Alaska.

After only one year, he had to return home to care for his sick mother, and he never returned to school.

"But I have struggled through life to educate myself," Lane said. "I don't think a person has to have a formal education to become a leader if he has the right attitude, and I made up my mind early I was going to become a leader."

Lane joined the Alaska Army National Guard in 1957, and in 1959 he traveled from Alaska to Fort Ord, Calif., for basic training.

"I went down in wintertime, in November," Lane recalled, "but to me it seemed very hot down there."

He remembers having to change his uniform twice a day because it quick-

ly became soaked with sweat.

"It was hard for me, but I made up my mind I wasn't going to let anything cause me to fail," Lane said.

"The discipline was tough, so I learned things pretty fast. They told me what to do, and I did it — no ifs, ands or buts!"

After basic training, Lane returned to Alaska and worked as a part-time Guardsman in Kotzebue. He remembers his company commander, John Schaeffer (now adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard), was a stickler for discipline.

"When I didn't do what I was supposed to do, he gave me extra duty or K.P.," Lane recalled. "And that was good. I'd have to work all evening to make up for my mistakes, so I sure tried not to make them twice."

Lane also found a job as a nurse's aide in the Kotzebue hospital. After he'd been there a while, one of the doctors asked Lane if he'd like to be an X-ray technician.

"I said, 'Sure, I'll do it,'" Lane remembered. "So they started giving me books."

Lane read and studied the books and within a week was taking the X-rays himself. About a year later he passed his tests and was licensed chief radiologist at the hospital.

Lane's belief in strong discipline and respect is practiced in his own home in Kotzebue. In fact, it's impossible to imagine how his family — with 18 children — could function without it.

Lane has one stepson and five children with his wife Vivian. Together they adopted six more kids and care for six other foster children.

"My wife and I grew up in big families," Lane said, "and we like having a lot of children. I saw we were going to have a lot of kids, so I built my house bigger."

Lane is proud of every one of his children.

"I've taught them all how to take care of themselves, as much as I could," he said.

"I wish I could have done more to train them in the traditional ways, out in the country, but with my work I couldn't take them out as much as I would have liked to."

"But they understand and know how to survive. I'm real happy with all of them."

*'I have pride in what I am, and that's an Alaska National Guardsman.'*

*—Wilfred Lane*



*Wilfred Lane lives in Kotzebue.*

Lane likes to perform traditional Eskimo dances and, now that travel between Alaska and the Soviet Far East is possible, says he would enjoy dancing with the Natives there.

"I try to keep the Native traditions in my life," he says, "and I encourage my sons and daughters to keep them, too."

He does a lot of subsistence hunting and fishing to feed his large family, and goes back to Point Hope almost every year for whaling.

Lane has thought a lot about eventually moving back to his birthplace in Point Hope, but isn't sure if that's right for him.

"My family wants to move up there, but Point Hope isn't Point Hope to me anymore," he said.

Since Lane left Point Hope, the village moved four and a half miles inland from where it used to be.

"I really have nothing to go home to," Lane said. "My parents are gone, and the house I grew up in isn't where it used to be anymore."

Most of all, Lane misses his brother who he respected more than anyone else.

"I was 48 years old when he died," Lane said, "and I never once in my life looked at him straight in the eyes. That's how much I respected him."

"He practically raised me, and he was the hunter for the whole family when my dad got old."

"He did everything for his five brothers and five sisters. He had a dog

team and he would go out hunting to keep food on our table."

It was Lane's responsibility to help take care of those dogs.

He mended their harnesses, built their houses, watered them and fed them twice a day. He says he had enough of that work to last a lifetime.

"I promised myself back then that if I ever had a chance to get away from taking care of dogs, I would never, ever, take care of them again," Lane remembers. "And that's one promise I've kept to this day."

Lane was recently named group sergeant major for the Alaska Army National Guard's newly formed 297th Infantry Scout Group. In his new position, he says he will concentrate on building respect, discipline and pride.

"We senior non-commissioned officers should have respect for our junior non-commissioned officers and others below us," Lane said. "If we want to be respected by them, we need to remember that respect has to go both ways."

Early in his Guard career, Lane was approached by an older woman who told him, "I have a lot of respect for you. The uniform you are wearing gave us the peace we have now."

Lane never forgot what that woman told him, and he works to instill that same pride in all his troops.

"I have pride in what I am," Lane said, "and that's an Alaska National Guardsman."