

Keeping In Touch With Heritage

Chevak Native Now In Anchorage Skilled In Making Baskets

For Jeanette Trumbly, a thirty-six year old woman living in Anchorage, making grass baskets is a way of keeping in touch with her Eskimo heritage. Jeanette was born in Old Chevak, and grew up in New Chevak and St. Mary's before moving to Anchorage in 1964.

Jeanette recalls that when she was a child, making baskets was one of the everyday skills of Chevak women. Like knitting or making mukluks, it was regarded as a way of life, and not singled out as a special art. In the days before baskets were made for trade, those baskets women made for their own use were made without lids, and were decorated, as Jeanette remembers, with pieces of dried ducks' feet skin. In Old Chevak, when women began to trade baskets at the village store, a basket of 8-10" might be worth \$1.50 in groceries, or it might sell for \$2-3.00 to white visitors coming into the village.

The grass used in making the baskets was picked in the fall, and women made most baskets in the winter, although some basket work took place in the summer months between times of berry picking, egg hunting, and cutting fish. Nowadays, living in Anchorage, Jeanette makes baskets year round. In the fall, she travels to Hooper Bay to pick the grass she will use during the coming year. Grass does grow in the Anchorage area, but it does not equal the

soft, fine, strong grass found at Hooper Bay and needed for fine quality baskets. And Jeanette

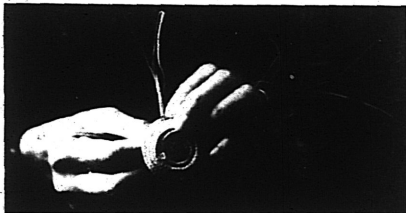
Trumbly's baskets deserve the finest grasses. They are meticulously sewn, and reveal a fine sense of color and design. Although Jeanette has only taken up basketmaking seriously in the last four years, she is already an accomplished craftsman. She has taught basketry for CINA, and next month she will be teaching a course at Alaska Pacific University. Diane Trumbly, Jeanette's eleven-year old daughter, has begun her first basket, and is receiving the same gentle encouragement Jeanette received as a young girl.

(Continued on Page eight)



Jeanette Trumbly starting new basket with trays recently completed in foreground.

Photos by Larry McNeil



the beginning of a basket

● Jeanette Makes Baskets

(Continued from Page Eight)

When asked about marketing her baskets, Jeanette said that she sells mostly through the shop at the Native Hospital where the artists set their own prices and receive 95% of the retail sale. Jeanette's baskets can also be seen at the craft exhibit during

Fur Rendezvous.

Often, one art leads to another, and such is the case with Jeanette. Her involvement with basket making led to her turning her hand to amateur photography to document her baskets and her grass picking trips to Hooper Bay,

and last year she won three first prizes for her photos. Now she is enrolled in a drawing class at Anchorage Community College. But most of all, she is becoming a very talented basket maker who is gaining an ever deepening appreciation for her Eskimo heritage.