

VISTA Volunteer Finds Genuine Warmth in Eskimo Village Work

By KENNETH PLETTER
VISTA Volunteer, Point Hope, Alaska

In the month that I have been in Point Hope, I have come to think of it in terms of my own home back in New Jersey, a place with genuine warmth, true friendships, and all of those things that make up a fine place to live.

From the moment I "touched down" on the airstrip, the village seemed to extend a sincere hand of friendship and this has been building ever since.

While some of the other VISTA Volunteers are still trying to acquire and fix up a suitable place to live, my own home (Cyrus Norton's place) was clean and ready upon my arrival enabling me to get on with village matters on my second day in town.

Assistance Request

The first item of business which the village council requested of me was, oddly enough, very much in line with my anthropological background giving me an immediate feeling of "being in the right place."

I was asked to draft a council resolution requesting assistance from the Army Corps of Engineers in building a seawall to protect the pre-contact village of Old Tigara which is rapidly being eroded by that big violent sea on the north side of the spit.

My last summer was spent in archeological excavation as a first step in the reconstruction of a Moravian water works from 1740 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The Tigara project is of a similar nature, and we are now looking forward to historical reconstruction after the completion of the protective seawall.

I have sent copies of this resolution to numerous congressmen, senators, seawall oriented people and reconstruction oriented people along with personal letters from myself extolling the many-sided benefits of such an endeavor.

I will enclose a copy with this letter in the hope that you might be able to mention the project in the **Tundra Times**.

The benefits that must come from such an undertaking are additional safety for the present village, the preservation of a People's Heritage which is quickly slipping into the sea and employment and other economic gains which are so necessary to the continued progress of a village which is on the way up.

Fill-In Teacher

At the present time I hardly have a free moment for VISTA type of work at all. It seems that the second set of Bureau of Indian Affairs teachers will not arrive in the village for at least two weeks, so for the past three days and until that unknown arrival date, I have been teaching the 4th, 5th and 6th grades in the BIA school, an extremely time-consuming job.

In addition, the village is planning a pre-school program which is scheduled to begin shortly, the Boy Scouts will be organized, a heater for the water pump will be sought, etc., etc.

The people in Point Hope seem never to sleep so I am trying to stay awake alongside of them.

Songs From Israel

On the amusing side, picture my cabin crammed with 25 of the four to fifteen set with Point Hope's VISTA Volunteer playing his Serian drum while singing and teaching songs from Israel.

These sessions have been running in two shifts through most of this week, since my popularity was given its big boost when I started teaching. There were plenty of kids in the first place from the first day, but now if there's two, there's twenty five at any time of the day or night.

Soon I will hold two records with this teaching business. First, I am the first teacher in a BIA school to work without pay, and I must be the most popular with the students if these after-hour tutorial sessions are a reasonable indication.

Tireless Hunter

I spent five days on the Kukpuk River with Roy Vincent, Patrick Attungana and company in an effort to catch some too-toosh (caribou).

No luck, but I did learn why no sane man will ever follow Patrick on a hunt. Up and down, up and down, the man is a real dynamo. I have the greatest respect for him in everything he does, however, learning this respect nearly cost me a heart attack, a poor beginning for my VISTA service.

We caught no caribou on that trip, but Patrick was at it the next week and brought home a beautiful buck.

(Editor's Note: Patrick Attungana, like his ancestors, is a relentless hunter and has great endurance. Patrick is around 60 years old.)

Truthfully, incidents and experiences are happening all of the time, some amusing and others just rewarding.

I can keep you filled in, from time to time if anything exceptional comes up.

New Jerseyite

My hometown is Kearny, New Jersey, just ten minutes by automob-