

Oregonian Helps Start Libraries In the Arctic

"Eskimo people like books, thought this would be the nice thing I could do for them because they have done nice things for me."

These words were spoken by friendly, ruddy-faced elderly man Dr. Paul Jensen of the Oregon College of Education in Monmouth, Oregon. Primarily through his influence, 2,600 books have been sent to the villages of Gambell and Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island.

He has also helped to establish a library at Anaktuvuk Pass, a remote village in the Brooks Range.

"I had a great deal of help from the Rotary Clubs of Monmouth and Independence in Oregon. Through their help, we sent 52 boxes of books to Gambell last year. Postage was paid and we were happy to do it," said Jensen. "We have also sent new encyclopedias to the three villages."

After inquiring as to where he might aim his next library projects, Dr. Jensen decided that he would try to establish them on St. George and St. Paul on the Pribilof Islands.

Jensen's projects started back in 1963 when he visited Savoonga in April and May of that year. Being an anthropologist, he wanted to make a study of the people there. John Kulowiyi, who is now president of the village council, invited the doctor to attend a meeting.

"Out of that meeting came the first library. I offered it to them and they accepted it," he said.

Jensen has developed another idea and has had good publicity on it in Oregon.

"We are making beautiful signs out of Douglas fir for the post offices of the three villages. I felt that it would give them the official status and the villages would feel proud of them."

When he was at Anaktuvuk Pass last year, Dr. Paul Jensen, as he expressed it, "I became a white man guinea pig."

At the time, the people of Anaktuvuk were being checked for radioactivity in their systems by Wayne Hanson and Earl Palmer for the Hanford Laboratories at Hanford, Wash.

"I lived on nothing but caribou meat for four weeks," said the doctor, smiling. "Homer Mekiana's boy, Joe, and Simon Paneak's boys, Robert and Ray, kept me from running out caribou. I had liver, heart, and all of the other choice pieces. It was a very interesting experiment and I certainly had excellent cooperation from the boys."

The doctor paused a moment and added:

"And, you know, I still like caribou meat."