

# Poldine Carlo writes of Nulato

**NULATO: AN INDIAN LIFE ON THE YUKON**, by Poldine Carlo, 94 pages, \$10.00.

The book presents an Athabascan woman's impressions of growing up in the village of Nulato on the Yukon River in the 1920's and 1930's.

Senator John Sackett appropriately states in his introduction, "This book records the vital elements of the Yukon Indian culture, a task that is too important and difficult, to be left to the anthropologist."

The book is richly illustrated with drawings by the author's son, Glenn Carlo, and with historic photographs of the Nulato area and people taken by Father Julius Jette, S.J. and contained in archives of Gonzaga University.

One noteworthy photograph is of the author's uncle, Joe Stickman, shows him with a very young-looking Fred Stickman.

The first part of the book discusses the life of a young Athabascan woman. The author explains how a girl was "put away" for a year to become a woman, marraige in the old Indian way and pregnancies.

The author's grandmother was betrothed to a medicine man. It wasn't the bride's idea, but "as time went on she gradually got used to him," Mrs. Carlo relates.

The chapter on pregnancies and childbirth portrays in graphic terms how concern for survival sometimes dictated extreme practices such that, in hard times, only male babies would survive.

The second part of the book tells of beliefs and remedies of Athabascan villagers. The author relates how nearly every superstition had practical application, such as the prevention of theft. She also tells of how an old woman of the village cured her of suspected tuberculosis of the bone.

Preservation of food, basketry and moose-tanning are each the subject of a chapter which deals with work division among the Indians. Mrs. Carlo explains the preparation of such delicacies as smoked fish, caribou and

moose meat. Another delicacy, ripened raw fish heads, is given the title of "Indian limberger cheese." The author writes that "they are ripe when nice and green."

Native smoke-tanned moose hides, the reader learns, are "just like wool" and much better commercially-tanned hides for beadwork.

In a part of the book called "Celebration," Mrs. Carlo explains about Indians "shooting a greeting," about the "Gee-mak" (message stick relayed from village to village by runners), the traditional Athabascan potlatch and stick dance.

Mrs. Carlo writes, "The stick dance is a very serious celebration that we the people of Nulato and Kaltag strongly believe in. It is ... a time to repay peo-

ple for what they have done for you at a time of death."

In the final part of the book, called "Old ways and new," the author reminisces of days of steam boats, moonshine stills on the river banks and a time when fish camps were everywhere on the Yukon.

The introduction provides yet another appropriate comment about the value of this book: "To social scientists, culture is an abstraction. It is analyzed by them as a 'value system' or 'mode of social organization.' To members of a cultural group, of course, culture is simply life. Mrs. Carlo's book is about life."

The book is available from the author at 2111 Southern Ave., Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 at a cost of \$10.00 plus \$0.50 postage.

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