

'Eskimo Boy Today' Portrays Life Style of Eskimo Children

Children's books about Eskimo children, especially ones which portray them accurately, are rare to date. So, when a book comes around with dozens of pictures and a text which gives a good portrayal of Eskimo children, it is a welcome sight.

ESKIMO BOY TODAY is such a book. For this, designed for young readers, two white photographers followed 10 year old Gary Hopson of Barrow through his summer and winter activities. Bob and Ira Spring filmed Gary's life in the transitional village he calls home—taking pictures of his home, his family, his classmates, his surroundings during the long arctic winter and the short, brilliant northern summer.

Though a full text was written by travel writer Byron children and adults. The focus is on Charles Gary Hopson, sixth grader, son of Mr. and Mrs. Al Hopson of Barrow, known as Ahnik-suak by his Eskimo grandparents descendent of hunters and whalers.

As a resident of Alaska's largest Eskimo village, he lives with an age of jet planes, educational television and in an electrically powered home with a refrigerator.

At the same time, they portray Gary Hopson as a boy whose traditions are those of his

Eskimo grandparents, who will learn the ways to hunt and survive in the north as well as the lessons from the lower 48 he learns in school. In the summer, Gary may go caribou hunting. Or, he may spend a day at the Barrow airport where his father works for Wien Airlines.

For many stateside children, **ESKIMO BOY TODAY** will provide their first accurate picture of the life style of their contemporaries in far off Barrow, on the edge of the Arctic Ocean, where the ice surrounds the village most of the year.

In school, as the text explains, Barrow children learn the same lessons as their stateside counterparts, unfortunately. They've never seen cows, cities, or common midwest farm animals except in pictures.

They've never seen an igloo either, until they see one a white man built at the Naval Arctic Research Institute in Barrow.

Through the long northern winter, with the sun barely above the horizon, and the short arctic summer, the cameramen followed Gary Hopson and his

classmates. Included are pictures of the children as they explore the beauties of the tundra on a class nature trip. They examine the low clinging arctic willows and the brilliant tundra wildflowers. In the below zero cold, they may bring ice cream home from the village store, or learn Eskimo dances and stories from their grandparents.

In another book we reviewed recently, an Alaskan Eskimo wrote about reading in his schoolbooks about some strange uncivilized northern people who lived in igloos and ate raw meat. Perhaps this generation of children will be able to read more accurate books about themselves.

Byron Fish explains to young readers how Barrow's civilization was already old when New York was a tiny trading post. Eskimo people conquered the cold for thousands of year, built houses near Barrow 400 years ago. He also explains the scientific reasons behind the low hanging

sun of the arctic and the long polar night. Although written for children, the book is interesting to adults as well.

Gary Hopson, the Eskimo descendent of an ancient culture is portrayed as a "typical American boy" who happens to live on the edge of the Arctic Ocean. Alaskan readers will see pictures of the children of Barrow and what they do with their days, children typical of almost any village of the northland.

Designed for stateside readers, **ESKIMO BOY** should prove highly popular with Alaskan children who find so little in their schoolwork with which they can identify.

NOTE: ESKIMO BOY TODAY. Photos by Bob and Ira Spring. Text by Byron Fish. Available for \$4.20 postpaid softbound and \$7.20 hardbound from Alaska Northwest Publishing Co. Box 4-EEE, Anchorage, Alaska 99509.