

Thrives at AMU—

Mississippi Cotton

Anchorage may never be "the cotton bowl of the North," but a little bit of Dixie is alive and blooming in the University of Alaska, Anchorage Greenhouse . . . Joyce Thompson's cotton plant.

Back in May, 1974, used-book sales representative Henry Wayne from California was visiting the UAA Bookstore where Joyce is assistant manager. When Henry, who was raised in Mississippi, found out Joyce was from Arkansas, he knew they were kindred spirits.

Noting the abundance of plants in the bookstore, Henry told Joyce she ought to see his cotton plant. He'd raised it from seeds Mississippi relatives had sent him.

"Because I knew about cotton and such things," explained Joyce, "he sent me a tuft of cotton from his own plant when he returned to California."

Believing that it was too late in

the year to plant the five seeds nestled inside the tuft, she waited until May of this year. Only one seed sprouted, and the seedling was set in the window behind Joyce's desk, carefully tended by the bookstore staff.

Pale yellow blossoms appeared, but then the late summer rains came, the sun crept lower on the horizon, and Joyce feared her plant was in trouble. John Gorham, UAA gardener, offered to watch over the plant in his greenhouse.

As September approached, the cotton bolls swelled and finally popped open to reveal "magic Mississippi cotton" as Henry had called it.

With Henry's seed had come this cryptic message only a true Southerner could understand:

"If you plant it, plan to chop it for 90 days at three dollars a day, and pick it for 60 days at three dollars a hundred. Remember, plant at your own risk."