

Up and Down the Kobuk—

Duffy Smith Is Loved

By LAEL MORGAN

Up and down the Kobuk — from Fairbanks to Chicken and Kotzebue — villagers are traveling by mail plane, snow machine and charter to visit Duffy Smith in Kiana.

Ask them why and they'll tell you, "Duffy is a fine man. He always helps people. And he tells good stories."

Smith, 75, recently returned from the hospital in Anchorage and he hasn't been feeling better since. He admits to visitors that he may not make a good recovery, but refuses to let it dampen a day. No sir, he's still got good stories to tell and he can still make visitors laugh.

The old-timer was born up on the Salmon River and became the

first of his Eskimo people to work with white prospectors.

"He always used to step right up and say, 'My name is Duffy Smith. I'm very glad to know you,'" recalls long-time neighbor Pauline Schuerch.

One of the old prospectors was Andy Garbin, Mrs. Schuerch, Mrs. Schuerch's father, who, with Jack Casanoff, founded Kiana. And before them there was "Spihe" Jack.

"Be sure and write that down. It's important," Smith directed in his Tundra Times interview. "Used to work for \$1.50 a day and thought it was darned good money."

"We Eskimos had seen gold before the white men came, all right, but we didn't bother to do anything about it.

"Those were tough days."

Once in those tough days, Smith was sick and not expected to recover but a woman of the village worked the poison out of his appendix with her hands and cured him.

Today her daughter, Esther Curtis, is Smith's health aide and everyone is glad she's got the job — especially Duffy.



Duffy Smith