

# Family offers contrast of past, present

by Verne Seum

Chukchi News and Information Service

KIANA — My mother and grandfather are people that I love very much. Both are full-blooded Inupiat Eskimos. Nevertheless, they exhibit definite contrasts in manner, purpose and influence.

My grandfather, on the one hand, a man of 62 years, is characterized by white hair and a stoic face. He has stern, piercing eyes that seem to read the thoughts and the souls of those he speaks with. He conserves his smiles for moments of true satisfaction, in which he celebrates quietly.

His 5-feet, 10-inch, 210-pound frame commands the utmost respect from those around him. He believes questions are unnecessary and that learning through observing accomplishes understanding.

My mother, on the other hand, at 41 has deep black hair that complements her compassionate face. Her gentle, loving smile does not detract from the luster of her glistening black eyes. She is an outgoing, witty woman who is proud of her heritage.

She has a petite build of 5 feet, 2 inches and weighs 104 pounds. Unlike my grandfather, my mother's views

## OPINION

are contemporary. She believes that in order to avoid confusion, verbal communication is necessary.

My grandfather, after raising children for 41 years, now leaves that chore behind him. He still makes his opinions on raising children known, though his conservative ideas on education lead him to believe that children should learn at home with their families. In his case, chores have first priority over extracurricular activities. At this point in his life, my grandfather kicks back and enjoys his retirement.

Far different, my mother, in raising five children, encourages obtaining formal education to supplement life's experiences. Her goal is that we continue our education after high school. To her, homework always comes first. Far from retirement, my mother loves working.

The conflicting influences these two

individuals bestow upon my life often cause problems. My mother, liberated and independent, has one son in his freshman year of college, a daughter in her last year of high school and enrolled in college courses, and a daughter in seventh grade moving ahead scholastically and determined to go to college.

My mother always pushes us to do our best in school. In complete contrast to my mother's contemporary views, my grandfather believes that women have their duties and should be submissive. Influenced by my grandfather, my brother has learned some of the traditional ways of hunting and fishing.

In my grandfather's household, my sister and I maintain the house and cook for our uncles. We also have learned that we have to budget our time effectively, because he feels we spent too much time at school and at school activities.

Here are two people that I love dearly, but what a contrast!

My grandfather lives in a time past, a time when tradition was the only way to survive, when education could only be taught through informal means and a time when women and men had

definite roles that ensured the survival of the people. To him, this life is secure and he fails to understand why our generation can't live the life he has led.

My mother, however, remembers the past, lives for today and prepares for tomorrow. She doesn't ignore tradition, but insists that we are able to adjust to new conditions. The world where she lives is modern, where acceleration and advancement are the means of survival.

She believes the way to advance is to increase one's education in the formal classroom. She lives the life of an independent woman. To her, to be educated is to be secure.

*Verne Seum wrote this piece in a writing class at Chukchi College, a branch campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She is a senior at Kiana High School, where she plays on the girls' basketball team. Last summer, Seum attended UAF's Rural Alaska Honors Institute, a college preparatory program for rural secondary students. Chukchi News and Information Service is a writing project of Chukchi College.*