

A student's plea to keep Mt. Edgecumbe

By Eleanor Weedman

It is a great privilege to share my feelings, as well as the feelings of the students, parents, and many concerned people about a very serious matter which will have such a tremendous impact on the state of Alaska.

There are many reasons why we feel the closure of Mount Edgecumbe High School will be a terrible mistake. You are probably well aware of the important role Mt. Edgecumbe has played in Alaska since 1947. Mt. Edgecumbe has earned an excellent reputation for quality education and has been responsible for producing outstanding leaders in the state of Alaska.

There are those who have become or are presently training to become doctors, lawyers, teachers; some are in college and a few are training to work for their Native corporations or are making many other kinds of valuable contributions to their state.

The government and people of Alaska have been wanting more Native Alaskan leaders in the state of Alaska. This requires good education. We believe that Mt. Edgecumbe offers that education which will prepare students to go on to training or higher education.

If Mt. Edgecumbe closes, I believe that there will be a greater increase of dropouts. There are students I have known from my region, as well as from other areas, who have dropped out and later attended Mt. Edgecumbe and then successfully completed their high school education, making use of themselves as good citizens.

Mt. Edgecumbe does not only have courses for intelligent and talented students, but has courses for average students and students who need special education.

We have teachers and dormitory staff who very often

spend many hours to take time working with students' personal needs. Some have been working for 29 years or more and still enjoy working for Mt. Edgecumbe and teaching the students. Because of the fact that many of the teachers at Mt. Edgecumbe do remain for a long period of time, they learn how to understand and work with the students.

In the villages, from my observation, the teachers do not stay very long. Because of this, they do not adjust to the students or conditions and get to know and understand them as well. There is not the continuity that Mt. Edgecumbe High School provides.

When I was attending the school in my hometown I was in a classroom which consisted of 3 subjects. In one part of the room a subject was being taught, in the other part there were two subjects being taught by one teacher.

The classes in many village high schools are inadequate and usually don't help students to benefit from them as academic work is not competitive. This is mainly because it is very difficult for the small staff in the Bush high schools to provide all the courses high school students need.

Because of this lack of challenging work and activities, many young people in the villages are becoming involved with drugs and alcohol. The number is drastically increasing each year. In contrast at Mt. Edgecumbe there is a wide range of activities, numerous opportunities for interaction and challenging academic work which helps the student to stay occupied.

In Mt. Edgecumbe there is a strict policy concerning drugs and alcohol which helps to discourage many students from using them.

Another strict policy which

is beneficial forces all students to be on time and attend all classes unless it is unavoidable; whereas in the villages tardies and absences are a big problem.

Some students who are yet still in grade school are looking forward to coming to Mt. Edgecumbe for their high school years. I have not only gotten my education at Mt. Edgecumbe but I've learned to make certain decisions, become self-reliant, and be more responsible because of the work we are required to do, both in the dorm and class, and the activities I have participated in, such as cross-country, track, drill team, gymnastics and class secretary.

This year I am assuming responsibilities as vice-president of the student council. The opportunities to develop leadership are limitless. I have also come to know my personal Savior.

If it hadn't been for Mt. Edgecumbe, I wouldn't have the knowledge I gained which will greatly affect my future plans. This is not provided in

my hometown. There, because there are fewer subjects and everyone knows one another well, the students aren't motivated to do their work in or outside class. When I attended Mt. Edgecumbe I saw a big difference in attitude and in effort in doing my work in and outside of class.

The chance to interact with many different Natives in various parts of Alaska is also a great opportunity students have at Mt. Edgecumbe. Living and working together helps us to gain understanding and a feeling of unity. This helps us to adjust to situations we will have to face later in life where we will need to meet and deal with people from our vast state.

Because my mother and a few other people from my house cannot read, write or speak very good English they wanted me to say a few things for them: "We feel that Mt. Edgecumbe has affected students in many different ways which probably no other school in Alaska would. The students are lucky

to have the variety of educations, activities, staff workers and provided transportation. We are thankful for all of that, but to hear that it might be closed is more than a pity."

Many of the people who favor closing Mt. Edgecumbe have never actually visited our school or talked with the students whose futures will be greatly affected. Is it fair to make such a decision which will greatly affect many of our futures without making an effort to personally insure that it is the right decision?

For the last two years the student council, as well as the student body, has been doing everything within our power to delay the closure of our school. We joyfully and gratefully received the news that Mt. Edgecumbe High School will be open for another year. However, the battle is not yet over.

We must insure that Mr. Edgecumbe High School will be here for many years to come in order to meet the needs of those future leaders

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We're proud of our school

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of Alaska who still have need of a school such as this in order to reach their fullest potential. We must not rest until this goal is achieved.

We cannot afford to become lax just because this school has been given a year's reprieve. There is much work to do. We who will graduate next year and those who have graduated at Mt. Edgecumbe the past years owe it to those who will follow us to guarantee that they will have the same opportunities that have been available to us. This is a debt that we owe to our people, our state and our school.

I understand the reasons for the possible closure of our school, but isn't adequately meeting the needs of the Native people worth any cost? If all the small schools provided an equal education, would it not cost more?

We are also very concerned about the fact that at the present time Mt. Edgecumbe will not be able to enroll freshmen for the 1982-83 school year. This is a big disappointment because we feel that those freshmen who would like to attend Mt. Edgecumbe should have the same chance to share the same valuable experience. It is our hope that perhaps the House Bill Number 812 would provide the funding for a freshman class.

Is it fair to take away the opportunity for those who strongly and deeply believe that this school is needed to help them achieve their future goals?

We would also like very much to see the state legislature pass a measure that would insure funding for Mt. Edgecumbe for the years to come.

We strongly believe it would be unfair to us who are presently attending and those who wish to attend in the future to take away this opportunity to develop leadership which has already benefited so many of us who are students and graduates of Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

We feel that Mt. Edgecumbe is essential. It is very hard for me, as well as those who believe so strongly in Mt. Edgecumbe to tell how very deeply many of us feel about our school and how much we respect Mt. Edgecumbe and what it stands for.

I cannot urge you enough to do everything within your power. We need your help!!!

We are proud of our school and feel that a freshman class should be allowed to enroll and that Mt. Edgecumbe should remain open, not only next year but for many years to come. We will greatly appreciate your full and active support in helping us to keep our proud tradition going strong!!!