

# Vigorous Cry of his Infant Son Gives Akiachak Father Smiles

When the cry of his infant son comes through loud and clear now, Eddie Joseph Lomac of Akiachak is glad of it. In fact, the more Eddie Junior kicks up a fuss, the more Eddie Senior smiles.

It's not that the young Eskimo father has a hole in his head, but that the hole in his son's heart has been mended. Now the much-travelled father and son are at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage for followup during the annual heart clinic there.

Although apparently normal at birth last January in the PHS Native Hospital in Bethel, Eddie Jr. worried his parents because of his lack of interest in feeding. Even though this was their first child, the young couple knew the baby should not tire so easily and should grow more.

At six-weeks' check-up

doctors noted the general problem. When Eddie was two months old he was admitted to ANMC for more exacting tests.

A congenital ventricular septal defect was the diagnosis. Worded in non-medical terms, the diagnosis was just as awesome: Eddie Jr. had a hole between the two chambers of his heart. Without surgery, the little one had no future.

ANMC physicians treated the infant medically for two weeks to improve the heart function and to make the child strong enough for the trip to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

There, after more heart studies and medical treatment, the youngster had open heart surgery to remedy nature's omission.

Such grave surgery in a six-month-old child is not

usual. But the circumstances in Eddie's life—so ill and so far from regular medical care—persuaded the doctors that this was the best way.

Eddie Sr., whose main source of livelihood is hunting and fishing in the Kuskokwim River area, not only took his son on the momentous journey to the strange and distant city. He also took the unfamiliar job as baker's helper in order to stay in Rochester. He says he missed only three days in seeing his son twice daily at the hospital.

Eddie says he was "kind a nervous" about the operation. Now, however, the 25-year-old father says he can see the difference in his son and feels "very happy and glad" about the new liveliness. His joy is shared by his wife Molly, formerly of Nunapit-chuk.