

Famed Eskimo Teacher Tony Joule Passes

Tony Joule, 69, the first Eskimo teacher working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and one of Alaska's first Eskimo teachers died March 11 at the Alaska Native Medical Center of a heart ailment.

Joule translated the Episcopal prayer book into Eskimo. He was probably the first, certainly was one of the first, native teachers ever to teach in Alaska, starting with a teaching stint with the Episcopal St. Thomas Mission school at Point Hope.

When the Interior Department's Bureau of Education, forerunner of the current Bureau of Indian Affairs, took over the schooling of the native children, Tony Joule transferred over to the Bureau teaching status.

At Point Hope, Joule was one of the first teachers that Howard Rock, editor of the Tundra Times, had in his school days.

"Tony was a stern old time style teacher who didn't hesitate to use the ruler," says Rock.

"He could read music but was unable to play any musical instrument," the editor remembers. "He once taught the Hallelujah Chorus to the village church choir at Point Hope, without the benefit of an organ or any musical instrument. The harmony he produced was enthralling to the villagers as well as to visitors to the village."

Most of the members of that church choir spoke little or no English.

Joule was born July 2, 1901 in Point Hope and lived there

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Tony Joule . . .

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until 1922 when he left to attend Northfield and Mount Herman Schools in Northfield, Mass. He was the first native of Point Hope to obtain higher education.

He returned to Alaska to teach for 44 years at Point Hope, Kivalina, Buckland, Deering, Elim, St. Michaels and Kotzebue. He retired from the BIA in 1962 and wrote a number of articles for the Tundra Times.

Tony Joule served as mayor of Kotzebue in 1964-65 and several times on the Kotzebue city council. He was a lay member of the Episcopal Church and served as translator in many villages. He also was a member of the territorial guard.

After his retirement from the BIA, Joule became a sanitarian for the Public Health Service on the Arctic Coast. He moved to Anchorage in 1968 to begin work on an English-Eskimo dictionary, a project he was working on at the time of his death.

Survivors include his widow, Mary; a son, Sylvester of Seattle; and four daughters, Mrs. Mabel Blatchford of Seward, Mrs. Vera Gelzer of Nome, Mrs. Mildred Bond of Anchorage and Annie Joule of Kotzebue.

Funeral services for Tony Joule were held Saturday, March 13, at All Saints Episcopal Church at Anchorage. Burial will be at Point Hope.