



Nunooruk learns from leadership

by Barbara Crane

Tundra Times reporter

NOME — Despite the wind and the cold, Sgt. Barbara Nunooruk enjoyed her two-week annual training exercise earlier this spring with the 1st Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard.

Her battalion camped out near Quartz Creek, 85 miles north of Nome; and for Nunooruk, the cold nights and chilly mornings were the hardest.

"It gets quite cold at night, so I don't sleep very well," she said. "And in the mornings I just have to make myself get out of my sleeping bag and get dressed quickly, before the cold goes through me."

Nunooruk has gone through annual training before, but this year for the first time she was in charge of the administrative section.

"Being in charge of the section is new to me, and it's taught me a lot," she said. "I've got to make duty rosters and assign jobs to people. There's a lot more responsibility and I'm working a lot more hours."

Her first day of the exercise was spent counting people, checking off names and making sure everybody would get paid as soon as they returned home.

"The paychecks will be handed out in the home villages," she explained, "because we want our people to spend their money in their communities, not in the bars in Nome."

Nunooruk also pulled her share of guard duty at night.

"We check tents to see if stoves are on, and if one is, we go in to make sure somebody is awake watching," she said. "We don't want any fires."

In the National Guard, men and women are given the same duties and they are expected to perform to the same standards, but Nunooruk says there are still some differences.

"The guys do treat us a little different because we're women," she said. "That's OK most of the time, but I really do like to pull my own weight."

Nunooruk thinks she enjoys the annual training exercise in part because it reminds her of her happy childhood.

"I grew up with seven of us in the family," she said, "and going out camping was always fun. It was a lot of work, of course, but it was a lot of fun, too."

"For me, being out on annual training is a lot like camping out with my big family. I'll miss everybody once our training is over."