

Tourists wild about Eskimo Olympics

Mary Reamer has worked with Indian tribes in Washington State yet says she has never seen traditional Native games such as those played in Fairbanks every year.

She was one of numerous non-Native tourists who sat for hours watching the difficult and sometimes amazing traditional games in the Patty Gymnasium last week.

And, the reaction that Reamer and her companion Scotty Scallan had to the games was held by others interviewed: the games show a spirit of companionship among the competitors that is rare in sports competition.

"It doesn't seem to be an individual effort. The athletes always offer to help one another and that is so great," said Reamer.

The fact that they were competing and at the same time helping one another says a lot about the Native and Eskimo cultures, said another tourist who said he knew nothing of the cultures before coming to Alaska.

The games were viewed with much enthusiastic interest by the tourists whose only negative comment was that they went on so long and that the gymnasium was very hot.

The heat was from rows of television lights placed throughout the large room for the benefit of the Public Broadcasting Station team filming the events for a special half-hour program later this year.

The length of time it took to complete the games was nothing new to the contestants and their stamina in the face of the long hours and the

heat was often marvelled at.

Albert and Merle Franklin of Sun City, Ar. have been to Alaska 12 times before to visit their children and this was their third visit to the Olympics.

"This is something I could look at all night," said Franklin. He, too, was impressed with the spirit of co-operation exhibited by the Olympians

but said he had no favorite event. His wife said she favored the Native baby contest and the ear weight carry.

Marls Goodrich of Sioux City, Iowa said the "real tough competition" of the games impressed him but he said he liked all the games, and had no favorite.

Gene and Roberta Ogden of Arlington, Va., said they knew

nothing of the Olympics until a woman on their ferry told them.

Their reaction was simple. "We love it. The greatest thing is they are great to teach about the Eskimo and Indian cultures."

Ogden said "The athletes compete but they are very supportive and friendly and warm with each other."

One couple said it is easy to pick out crowd favorites such as Reggie Joule and Carol Pickett. "It's obvious that the crowd likes some people and if you watch those people for very long it's easy to see why. They give help and are so supportive."

All of the tourists said they wanted to learn more about the culture of the Eskimos and Indians because of the Games.