

Educational decisions

By MARILYN RICHARDS

Today's young people have many decisions to make about their education.

Is college and the old sheepskin really that important as compared to experience? Should students remain in Alaska and pursue careers, retain their inherited lifestyles, or go Outside for a "quality" education?

What about the advantages and disadvantages of vocational or technological educations?

Matthew Nicholi has one helluva decision to make.

Nicholi, a 22 year old from Kwethluk, has attended the University of Alaska/Fairbanks the last three years majoring in political science and economics.

In his senior year in high school he attended a special program enabling him to enroll in courses at the University of Oregon at Eugene. In his junior year in college he was an exchange student at Westfield college in Massachusetts.

Presently the young Native is head of the communications department of Calista, Corp. in Anchorage. He is also enrolled in a correspondence study program with George Washington University, Willie Hensley's alma mater. Nicholi expects to graduate June 1 from George Washington.

The talented and articulate young man has several difficult choices to make. He has been accepted at Harvard, Yale and George Washington Schools of Law. He has also been offered a Shell Oil scholarship to study petroleum engineering at Stanford.

"My uncle is a lawyer so there's a little pressure on that side," Nicholi admitted. "And Yale is probably out because it's pretty expensive."

And Calista, which Nicholi is enrolled in and employed by, has an oil exploration agreement and scholarship program with Shell Oil. A Native expert and specialist in petroleum would be almost as valuable a resource as the product itself.

Nicholi, who possesses an infectious grin comments, "you can write the story but don't use my name. Oh, all right." After all, some people don't even have choices.

Betsy Gelvin, 22 of Central, faces a different kind of decision. Gelvin attended the UA/Fairbanks, Schiller College in Berlin, and graduated last year with a B.S. in psychology and German from the University of Oregon at Eugene.

Gelvin recently joined the Culinary Union in Fairbanks. To get out on the pipeline on that union's "B" list, she is currently working as a dishwasher at a local hotel. She needs 200 hours to make the list.

"I want to work to make money to help repay loans and to further finance my education," she explains. Gelvin has been accepted at the University of Massachusetts. She would spend one year in Frieberg and the next in Boston, receiving her master's in German in 1978.

"My problem is that in some areas BA's don't mean a thing. Its the master's or doctorates that help," she continues, "But while out I'm on the pipeline, therewill be thousands of others out there getting their masters ahead of me."

"Nowadays when I'm in Fairbanks, my social calls are arranged around my friends' visits to union halls. I've got friends folding sheets, digging ditches, mopping floors, driving trucks, caulking pipe and filing discrimination suits against their employers. They've got degrees in everything, from sociology to biology to art," adds a die hard who insists the pipeline isn't for everybody.

"The pipeline and money are here now. But in five or ten years, everybody will have their graduate work done," remarks Gelvin.

Barbara Kimberlin, 25 of Anchorage, is a junior majoring in elementary education. She discontinued studies at Fairbanks to become a stewardess and later to get married. Now that she is divorced she wants to get her degree, but she'd like to become a stewardess again so her young daughter can receive travel benefits.

Pipeline work also seems alluring to her, except for the long periods of separation from her daughter, family and friends.

But whatever choice a student or young person makes, he should receive the same respect and consideration he has given his decision in return. Give those people the encouragement and support, don't tell them their decisions are right and wrong.

Young people should be welcomed into the world with open arms not to closed doors or deaf ears. Instil confidence in them, don't neglect them, for if you haven't noticed, Alaska has changed lately.