

ESKIMO WOMAN NAMED JUDGE

Nora Guinn of Bethel Appointed to Serve in 4th Judicial District

A 47 year old Bethel woman, diminutive and four foot eleven inches tall and 98 pounds, became a District Judge on October 3 this month at Nome.

Mrs. Nora Guinn, who for 26 years had been a public servant and benefactor for her people, was sworn in as a District Judge for the 4th Judicial District with headquarters at Bethel.

The unique and impressive ceremony was conducted by Judge Hugh Connelly of Fairbanks after the authorization was signed by Judge Everett Hepp, also of Fairbanks.

At that moment, Judge Nora Guinn attained the highest position in the Alaska court system ever to be held by one of her people.

In submitting information and data about his wife, Charlie Guinn said:

"Please forgive a proud and happy husband for blowing the horn for his wife. You have probably heard that Nora was appointed District Judge at Nome last week... As far as we can determine this is the first time such an honor has been given an Alaskan Native... We are all so doggoned proud of her and want to give this as much publicity as possible..."

Judge Guinn began her public service shortly after she married Charles W.

Guinn in 1941 when the couple moved to the village of Tununak on Nelson Island on the Bering Sea.

"Here she started her career of helping her people which has continued for 26



Judge Nora Guinn

years," said Charlie Guinn. "There were few travelling doctors and nurses in those days and, in addition to teaching school, she delivered babies, dispensed medicine and cared for the sick and injured."

In the late forties, she and her family moved to Marshall on the Lower Yukon River where she

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Judge Nora Guinn . . .

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continued her medical help over a large area.

The family returned to Bethel in the early fifties. Judge Guinn then served terms in the Bethel city council. She was also active in 4-H work. Around this time, she served as assistant U. S. Commissioner for two years prior to Alaska statehood.

She was later appointed Deputy Magistrate for the Bethel district and served in this position until her appointment to the judgeship this month.

Judge Nora Guinn has gained a unique reputation in the manner she conducted her court during the past eight years.

Speaking fluently the several dialects of the Kuskokwim, Yukon and Nunivak Island areas, she frequently conducts entire court sessions in the language of her people.

Her work does not end with the dispensing of a fine or a sentence:

"What can we do to prevent a recurrence? What do we need in the form of training or education? Where can we help?"

These are questions she asks city, state and federal officials in her efforts to improve legal services for her people.

Judge Guinn has deep interest in the youth of the Southwest area. Working closely with the Youth and

Adult Authority, she acts as a parole officer, gives frequent counselling, speaks before school assemblies and civic groups and does everything possible to improve the welfare of the growing boys and girls of the area.

"Her district covers nearly 100,000 square miles in the far-Southwestern Alaska and she travels frequently by small bush airplanes to the dozens of little villages, holding court, conducting inquests, meeting with village councils, helping her people with their many problems," said Charlie Guinn.

Judge Nora Guinn is the mother of nine children and grandmother of four. The little woman has huge respect and admiration of all with whom she comes in contact.

She has a quick smile with natural charm and personality. Defying her diminutive size, Nora Guinn has great capacity for work—often working 16 hours a day.

Judge Guinn was born Nora Venes at the village of Akiak on the Kuskokwim River in 1920 to a Norwegian father and an Eskimo mother.

She attended territorial grade school at Akiak and high schools at the now defunct Eklutna High School and in Portland, Oregon.