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Stickman on the pipeline

(Continued from Page 3)

about that the other night, someone came from away far off to ask me questions and just talk about important stuff on and on . . . So I recognized you, both of us knew. I was back in my old cabin, it was re-eal dark outside, and then my kin came, a family person, and did some strange noises and said lots of strange things . . . There were animals around, too, you know, they were talking about me those animals, an old poor man all alone in the cabin, and you know what? My mother came to me, just like the old days, working by the fire and pots on the grub, she said it would be cold soon, so I knew I was going back on the Pipeline, and sure, the Union in Fairbanks guy, he called on the radiophone to the village store the next day, so here I am at this Prudhoe Bay. Another time my lead dog was sick, and I had this dream about it, . . .” Fred talked on and on, an open channel to a raw, crackling psyche; a brilliant force lighting up four torn, featureless walls.

Fred is used to hard, steady work, and has had trouble adopting the very different tactics necessary on a cost-plus job like the Pipeline. There is a skill to lasting on such a job, an ability to always look busy while actually doing nothing at all.

Learning to live with the uncertainty, the indecision, the commuting to work every day for an hour each way in an old school bus; all of it takes its toll. Fred hates the busride as much as anything, it's enough to send him home, maybe. So in camp, he sometimes fills pool in drafty recreation halls, not caring about winning; he sometimes fills the soiled bedroom floor with crumpled newspapers, unread.

He lays on his bed now, right now, holding both triceps and hugging himself as if the torrid room were really drafty. A coughing, sad and wistful man drones on some more . . . “But there is a lot of good things here. Good food, good cooks, good baker, good maid service. What I miss here is gambling, and of course the African girls, like Anchorage. They go after you, and beg you, then they rob you also. You can't win . . . It's a good place for an old bachelor like me, especially when you come off the Slope, with all that easy money . . . Things won't or can't change too much. Everything is running smooth with the North Slope money . . .”

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**Raven's Bones
for Native artists
and writers**

Ishmael Reed & Bob Callahan will be in Sitka for a poetry reading November 26.

Reed is the author of 'Flight to Canada' - 'Mumbo Jumbo' - 'The Last Days of Louisiana Red' & 'Yellow-back Radio Broke Down.' He has also published poetry, 'Conjure' & 'Chattanooga,' and is editor for the annual anthology, 'Yardbird Reader.'

Callahan is director and editor of the Turtle Island Foundation, which publishes New World literature. Callahan also edits 'The New World Journal.'

The free reading will be at the Sitka Visitors Center, at 7:30 p.m.

The Raven's Bone Foundation, a new Native arts group, is sponsoring the free reading. The foundation has been formed to review and initiate programs in the Native arts field. Work has also begun on a journal, which will serve to develop a Native literature program. The journal will also provide a forum in which Native writers will be given the opportunity to develop their art.

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Department of Education's
Emergency
Regulations**

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