

Seeks Alcoholism Solution in Future

March 23, 1968

To the Editor
Tundra Times
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Your March 8 "Testimonial on Alcoholism" written by Mrs. Irene Katchatag prompts me to write. While I agree basically with the comments contained in the testimonial and do not doubt Mrs. Katchatag's experiences, I would like to expand on her comments.

It seems that Mrs. Katchatag's lament is what used to be and not what can be. What has happened in the past cannot be done over or erased, but we can only strive to do better as we face the future.

Mrs. Katchatag asks "Why were we interrupted from our way of life, the Eskimo way?" At the same time, she indicates an interest in further education for her children. Having gone to school through the eighth grade, she understands the importance of learning. I ask, what is one goal of education? Education encourages improvement over what has been done before.

When our forefathers took the step and attended their first lessons in school they, at that very moment, started a change in our Alaska native way of life. They did not anticipate all the problems this step would involve, but can we blame them for wanting to learn?

At the beginning of her article Mrs. Katchatag states, "I am glad I am under the U. S. Flag. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion."

I ask, once again, why do we have this freedom? If Alaska had not been bought by the United States from Russia, what kind of freedom would we Alaskans have today? Who bought our freedom?

Unfortunately, along with the many advantages of freedom under the United States Flag, the white man, unintentionally, presented some problems to us. Are any groups of people exempt from problems? Did the founders of our democratic way of life stop striving when they faced seemingly insurmountable problems?

Indeed, the problem of excessive drinking faces our people. Our white brothers also face this problem. In looking back, let us not let this problem depress us; instead let it inspire us to work together toward a possible solution. Like Mrs. Katchatag, I too remember weeks of camping where time was unimportant, living without having to pay rent, hunting without a license, chopping wood, carrying water and so forth. I also remember those days in school where as I learned, the more curious I became about the "outside" world. This curiosity encouraged me through high school and on to college.

It is nice to reminisce over "old times." People have done

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it from generation to generation. These same people realized that things cannot be as they once were; they had only the future to look forward to.

Sincerely,

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