

# Homelike Hope Cottage Houses Retarded Native-White Children

"Cathy is 12 years old but she has a mentality of a child 11 days old," Mrs. Nancy Stuart spoke quietly as she stroked Cathy's shoulder.

Cathy's growth has been stunted by her mental deficiencies. Her head was small as if it had been arrested of its growth since she was 11 days old. She acted as a child would that many days old.

Her mouth moved and her tongue rolled as a tiny child. She clumsily and in childlike manner took food fed to her with a spoon. She seemed unaware that there was anyone around.

Cathy laid on her back making movements of a newborn

baby. One remarkable thing showed through her mental deficiencies. Her complexion was bright and babylike as if she thrived on her diet.

Indeed, care of the mentally retarded children at Hope Cottage at 5412 Dorbrandt Street, Anchorage, Alaska, was good and quietly efficient.

Mrs. Nancy Stuart is the manager-director of the Hope Cottage that houses at the present time around a dozen children.

Mrs. Clara Salisbury, an elderly, kindly woman came into the cottage and promptly picked a tiny native Alaskan baby to hold and to walk around with it.

"As you know, these children are mentally retarded," Mrs. Salisbury said quietly. "They need the same attentive care. They need to be loved and even in their condition, they respond to loving care."

"We're trying to find foster homes for some of the children locally," Mrs. Salisbury continued, "so we won't have to send the children away. There is a great need for homes for the retarded children scattered around the State. Perhaps we could have three to five homes in Alaska."

Hope Cottage is one of three homes for multi-handicapped re-

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# Retarded Children . . .

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tarded children. Indeed there are multi-handicapped children at Hope Cottage.

A large percentage of the children in the three homes are Alaska native youngsters, Eskimos, Indians and Aleuts.

There is Gussy, a year old child from Alakanuk. Gussy is a little flirt. She casts mischievous looks at you, smiles and hides her face on the blanket in her crib.

Gussy could be taken as normal at first sight. She is engaging, sweet with a ready smile—but, she is also suffering from the curse of mental retardation.

There is a native child—a boy—who, except for a cruel parent might have been normal. He is one of the severe multi-handicapped children. Parental beatings had injured his brain.

The boy writhes. He seems oblivious to things around him. He grunts as if to escape something. Hope of any kind is extremely grim for this boy. Thanks to Hope Cottage, the boy gets the same thoughtful care as the other children in the home.

And then there is Marty. A disease had damaged his brain. Marty is a terminal case. Which means there is no hope for him. He is losing his strength daily. He can no longer eat by mouth and he is now being fed through his nostrils.

Two weeks ago, Mrs. Nancy Stewart said:

"Marty is not going to last. The doctors have given him 30 to 60 days to live. He can no longer swallow food. His muscles are deteriorating. The disease is paralyzing the parts of the brain that control his muscles."

All of the children in Hope Cottage are well dressed no matter their condition.

Two young native women, Elizabeth Benedict and Bridget

Aluræ, work as assistant aides at the Hope Cottage. They bottle-feed tiny children and dress them. Elizabeth is from Emmonak and Bridget is from King Island.

"We have tried to give the children a homelike atmosphere here," said Mrs. Stuart.

Despite the grimness of the young patients conditions, there is indeed a homelike atmosphere at the Hope Cottage. Smell of food cooking in the kitchen floats in the rooms.

Mrs. Stuart said that the State of Alaska was paying \$285 per month per child at the cottage, but at the other two cottages the payment was \$226 per child.

She pointed out that at the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, the state was paying \$960 per bed per month.

"We are scheduling a visit to the cottages by the state legislators on December 1 so they can see the children and Mrs. Stuart and her staff," said Bob Halcro.

Halcro is a businessman in Anchorage who has taken interest in the homes of the retarded children.

State Rep. Genie Chance also works for the interest of the children with a group headed by Dr. Elizabeth Tower. Others are Dr. Carl Koutsky of the API who screens the children for admission to the homes; Chancy Croft, Helen Beirne and Mrs. Clara Salisbury.

Jim Thomas, a Tlingit Indian, who came with the visiting group to the Hope Cottage said to Halcro on leaving:

"It's hard to believe the conditions of those children. You can count me in. I don't know what I'll do but I'll try to do something."

Thomas is being employed by the Alaska Federation of Natives.