

Henry Brown begins medical studies

By HOWARD COFFIN

HANOVER, NH—He was called the "shaman," the local medicine man with powers from the devil who treated the sick. But there was quiet talk that he worried more about his own health than the people of the village. And did he not let slip away the lives of the ill in hopes of gaining more life from their bodies?

Henry Brown came at an early age to distrust deeply the shaman living in the small Alaskan town that was Brown's boyhood home.

And Brown early on came to wonder why so many fellow Eskimo children went off to far away hospitals only to return in wooden boxes to grieving parents.

Brown's two younger brothers had died of tuberculosis before he was born, and the family moved from the coast to a

village far inland to escape the disease. Friends told them they should flee.

Henry John Brown, named after the two brothers who had died of TB, went with his family to Mountain Village in southwestern Alaska.

He is now at Dartmouth Medical School, one of no more than five Eskimos in medical schools anywhere. If there are other students in his new class at Dartmouth who are uncertain about their futures in medicine, Henry Brown is not among them.

Long ago he resolved to become a doctor and to practice family medicine. It is still his goal that he will one day return to Mountain Village, population 600, and work in a district clinic just now being built that will serve eight small Eskimo villages.

He will deliver better health care to his people than they have ever received.

He plans to leave Hanover when his medical schooling ends and spend his residency with his people working at a hospital in Alaska. He even hopes to work summers in health care back home while at Dartmouth.

Finally he will go back to the clinic and also build a cabin where he can go occasionally into the wilderness to live as have his people for centuries. His father was a trapper and salmon fisherman along the Yukon River.

Brown served in the U.S.

Navy for two years as a hospital corpsman and subsequently studied community health in Arizona. In the past he was troubled upon his return to Mountain Village when old friends would say he no longer acted or spoke as an Eskimo.

His reply was firm and direct. "I am an Eskimo," he would say.

Brown spent two years as a Navy corpsman in California and Okinawa, all the while learning health care. But his relatives back in Mountain Village wondered why he had done nothing for his people.

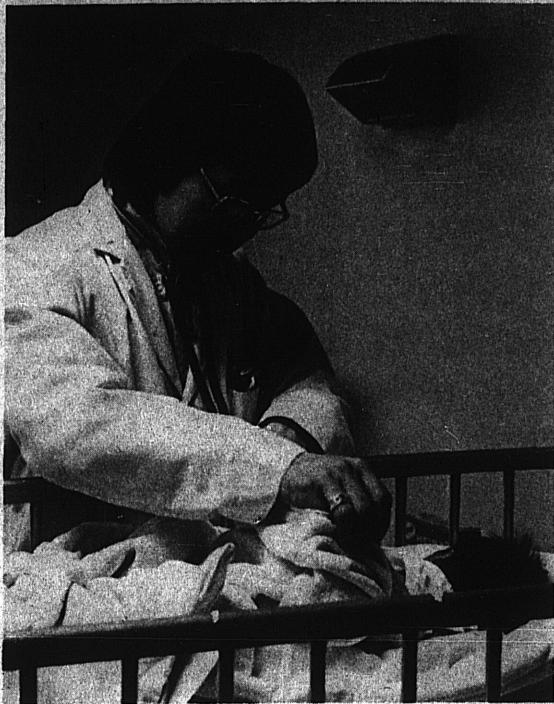
Brown returned to Alaska to teach health aides at the only hospital within 150 miles of home, in Bethel. He there met Dartmouth Medical School Associate Dean Philip O. Nice and another Dartmouth Medical School graduate.

He began developing an interest in the medical school in Hanover. He was looking for a small school and he liked the descriptions of the land around Hanover.

He studied health at West Central Arizona College and then received a B. S. degree in biology from the University in Anchorage.

Last March he flew for an interview to Hanover via Logan Airport in Boston where he boarded a twin engine "Otter" aircraft for the flight.

In August he began his studies at Dartmouth Medical School.



Dartmouth Medical Student Henry Brown

There is no longer a shaman in Mountain Village. But neither is there a doctor in the Yukon River village. Health aides come and radio the distant Bethel hospital for the advice of doctors.

Brown intends that before

too many more years have passed a doctor will reside in Mountain Village in a clinic with modern medical equipment. The doctor will be named Brown and his patients will be native Americans—Eskimos.