

# These 3 all have something in common

by Martha Ramoth

Chukchi News and Information Service

KOTZEBUE — Although we differ in experience and outlook on life, all people have some things in common: We like to talk about things, people and ideas.

Some of us may mostly talk about things. For instance, my friend Betty loves to talk about things. She grew up very poor, and it seems as if all she wants to do now is talk about her things.

## Inupiat Paitot People's Heritage **OPINION**

Whenever I visit her, I learn about prices of things, or about the latest computer on the market.

I remember when I first visited her, Betty was telling me about her sewing room. She said she had material, patterns, furs and boxes of yarn yet to be used. She talked about how her mother didn't have what she has now.

Sometimes when I visit, Betty will be busy counting her jewelry, such as her jade and gold watchband, or her diamond watchband. The cabinet in her room is full of beaded hairholders. She said some were given to her and some she purchased. Most of them were made by Indians from Arizona. There are simple and fancy designed hairholders. She has them in various colors and sizes. I have never seen her wear any, but she does love to count them and talk about them.

A couple of months ago, Betty bought a 36-inch color television. On Friday nights, sometimes I watch some shows with her. We'll talk about

the weather, or what we did that day. Then, she'll see an advertisement for an IBM computer, and could go on for hours talking about it.

If Betty talks about things, my other friend, Joe, could not care less, because he is a people person.

Joe enjoys the company of people so much that he hardly ever stays home. With a special knack for knowing people's activities in town, Joe likes to know all about your latest boyfriend, or what you are studying at the college. Soon, though, he will switch from you to other people, such as Laura, his neighbor, who had people over at her house the night before. Or how Jack Smith and his brother got the biggest caribou, or how a student made the honor roll at the high school.

Joe even knows who most of my own relatives are, half of whom I have never met myself.

Last year, when I was out of a job, I told Joe about my problem. A couple of days later, I was getting phone calls from local employers offering work. I was hired the next week.

Joe meets most of the new people in town soon after they arrive, because he loves to talk about and be with people so much.

At the grocery store, for example, Joe seems to spend more time talking than shopping.

Joe would make an excellent public relations person for some company needing to improve their relationship with the community. He loves talking about people, and is positive about them most of the time.

He said his parents encouraged him as a child to be open and friendly to people.

My friend Susan, on the other hand, was influenced by her philosophy

teacher in college. She loves talking about ideas. When she does spend time with people, she talks for hours about her ideas.

Susan spends hours reading books on art, music, religion and health. If I think I'll spend 15 minutes visiting her, I'll end up listening one or two hours to her latest discoveries in reading.

The latest book she read was *In Search of the Miraculous* by P.D. Ouspensky. As she sips on her cup of tea, she'll look into space and explain, how "the noted author of Tertium Organum combines the logic of a mathematician with the vision of a mystic in his quest for solutions to the problems of the universe."

On talking about books on art and music, Susan acts as if she just savored a most delicious dinner. She has read the biographies of Monet, Picasso, Dali and Howard Rock. Her favorite was of Howard Rock, the Native writer originally from Point Hope. She was fascinated by Rock's style and the poems he wrote, and how assertive he was on Native issues and problems, and how he formed the first statewide Native newspaper.

One of Susan's other favorite subjects is religion. Having studied to become an Episcopal priest and dropped out, she still talks about Episcopalianism and how much the church has changed. Susan says she appreciates how the church got involved in Native culture but didn't ban the language or dancing or singing as other churches did. She said the Episcopalian Church is still small in Kotzebue, but it is still the only church group that Eskimo dances.

On talking about the world, Susan is concerned about world peace and

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conservation. One of the people she has difficulty discussing is former President Reagan. She doesn't agree with his support for the national defense. She said since he came into office, our educational system has suffered financial losses. Her other concern is oil and offshore development and how it will affect Alaska wildlife. She would like to form a conservation group in Kotzebue that would have a voice to express to Congress.

Although Susan spends more time thinking and talking about ideas, I don't think that makes her better or smarter than Joe or Betty. All of them have something in common. I believe they all have the capacity to be free thinkers.

*Inupiat Eskimo Martha Ramoth, who speaks her Native language fluently, grew up in Selawik and now lives in Kotzebue, where she works for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. She wrote this piece in a writing class at Chukchi College, a branch campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Chukchi News and Information Service is a writing project of Chukchi College.*