

Vera Olemaun — Outstanding health provider

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING is proud to have amongst us the Outstanding Health Care Provider of the Year for the North Slope Borough, Vera Olemaun. She was presented this award at the Alaska Native Health Conference in Anchorage on October 19, 1982.

For nearly twenty years, Vera Olemaun has been a comfort to persons seeking health care on the North Slope. Born near the Colville River, she has lived nearly all of her life in the Barrow area and is a familiar face to local residents.

The Old Barrow Hospital was her first place of employment as a nurse's aide, when routine duties included shoveling coal to feed the furnace, mopping floors at night, and cooking for patients as well as routine patient care activities.

After the present hospital was built, Vera once again assumed a nursing assistant position and became much appreciated, not only for her dedication and dependability, but also for her astute assessment of patient needs and ability to work as a team member with other staff members.

Since nearly all of the medi-

cal and nursing personnel came from places considerably South of Barrow, the unofficial job of orienting them to the Barrow lifestyle and culture often was a part of her job.

Her method of acculturating people is very subtle. By gently suggesting alternatives for approaching a situation or quietly indicating extended family relationships, she has shared knowledge and increased understanding more quickly than possible with a direct approach.

Presently employed as a member of the Public Health Nursing Department, Vera is a cornerstone of the team specializing in assisting with the needs of elderly clients as well as inspiring courage in youngsters facing the challenge of immunization. She has been a tremendous asset as a community outreach person and adds much more to the department than her title of nursing assistant and interpreter implies.

A widow for the past ten years, Vera spends much of her time socializing with a large and very active extended family. She has raised two adopted children and has three adult

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stepchildren. Family members include stepson Nate Olemaun Jr. and brother-in-law the late Eben Hopson, Sr., active political figures on the Slope.

It is with great pleasure that we present Vera Olemaun as the Outstanding Employee of the Year.