



WALLY VAN VLIET FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

A MODEL OF THE "GREAT LAMP" to be erected on the University of Alaska's Fairbanks campus is studied by university officials. The

lamp will be three and a half feet wide, on a five-foot rock pedestal, and will be similar to the traditional Eskimo seal-oil lamps.

Eskimo Lamp Planned for U A

FAIRBANKS—When you are used to the friendly feeling in an Alaskan village, a modern university campus can seem pretty lonely.

"The first time I came to the University of Alaska campus at

Fairbanks," said Emily Ivanoff Brown, "I thought the atmosphere was like a frigidaire—cold. People didn't smile; no one spoke to strangers."

Mrs. Brown is an Inupiat Eskimo, who was born in Unalakleet in 1904. She taught school in Alaska's villages for 20 years before coming to the university to finish her bachelor's degree. Last year she earned a master's degree in communication arts.

After experiencing the strangeness and loneliness of a big campus, she became determined to bring something of her people's culture to the university, to encourage Native students to stay in school until they could become familiar with the different way of life there.

"I am a member of the Alaska Heritage Writers Association," she said, "and we decided that it would be good if the students could see something on the campus that would remind them of the familiar ways of their own people. We decided to erect a great lamp that would burn on the campus as a symbol of knowledge."

To the Native people, the flat, saucer-like oil lamp, carved out of soapstone, slate, or other

materials, was the traditional center of family life, carefully tended by the woman of the house. A strip of a special type of moss, soaked in melted fat, was laid along a ridge dividing the lamp into two areas.

Chunks of seal fat or whale blubber were placed on the other side of the ridge. The moss wick was then lit, and as it burned, the fat would gradually melt and run through slits in the barrier to provide fuel for the flame.

The hand-carved lamps were of different shapes, and varied in size from several inches to several feet wide. They were used for light, heat, cooking, and melting ice for water and had to be constantly tended.

The Great Lamp planned for the university by the association, will be shaped as a soft-cornered triangle approximately three and a half feet wide and made of hand-hammered copper. The lamp will be designed and produced with the cooperation of the university's art department.

It will be placed somewhere near the center of the campus, on a piece of quartz or granite five feet high. The campus totem pole, erected in 1966 as a me-

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Lamp. . .

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monial to the traditional way of life of Alaska's Indian peoples, will be moved to a more central location near the lamp, demonstrating the idea of Native unity.

"The site will be among trees to provide the serenity that an eternal flame deserves," said Mrs. Brown. "We are planning to place it in a circular area 18 feet wide with hand-crafted log benches around the edges. Surrounding the lamp will be ptarmigan willow, the Eskimo symbol for the Native peoples who thrive in the Arctic in spite of a harsh environment. There will also be plantings of wild forget-me-nots and Siberian wallflowers. The area will be cobbled with stones contributed to the project from outlying villages."

The Alaska Heritage Writers Association is hoping that funds for the project may be raised through contributions of money or supplies. Interested persons may write to the association at the University of Alaska, Box 90826, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.

Members of the association are: Dr. Walter Soboleff, chairman; Mrs. Brown; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Asicksiks; Linda Badten; Frank Berry; Virginia Dows; Poldine Carlo; Elaine Ramos; Dr. and Mrs. W.R. Ricklefs; Mr. and Mrs. Ron Senungetuk; Mr. and Mrs. Joe Senungetuk; Edith Tegosiak; Edna Wilder and Mr. and Mrs. Wilson.

Miniature Eskimo lamps which burn vegetable oil are being manufactured on a non-profit basis by the Pottery Works of Fairbanks, Box 81467, College, Alaska 99701. Proceeds from their sale are divided between an honorarium for Mrs. Brown, who designed them, and a scholarship fund in the university's journalism department.