



ESKIMO GIRL IN ASIA—Jenny Alowa of Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island and a student at the Alaska Methodist University in Anchorage, is quite a distance away from home as she stopped to chat and pose with a man with a yoke on the streets of Bangkok, Thailand. Jenny worked as a guide at the Alaska pavilion of the Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan. After finishing work at the Expo, Jenny decided to see more of Asia before returning to AMU.

—JIMMY BEDFORD Photograph

Jim Bedford Meets Savoonga Eskimo Girl in Asia's Malaysia

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Although the following article by Jimmy Bedford was meant for Thanksgiving week (it came on Thanks-

giving Day mail), we are printing it for its unique interest. Jimmy is the member of the Board of Directors of the Tundra Times. A journalism professor, Bedford is on a sabbatical leave from the University of Alaska.)

of her life, in Asia. She had gone to EXPO 70 as a guide in the Alaska pavilion and when

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(SPECIAL to the TUNDRA TIMES)

By JIMMY BEDFORD

BANGKOK, Thailand—With Alaska's small population, there is little likelihood of meeting a fellow Alaskan in some remote country like Malaysia—but that's where I met Jenny Alowa, 23, a St. Lawrence Island Eskimo now living in Nome.

We were both traveling by train from Butterworth to Bangkok on the Thai international express and her seat was just across the aisle.

"Are you from Alaska?"

"So am I."

"Well, I'll be doggone."

The conversation went from there to inquiring about people we knew and how was so and so, until the rest of the passengers thought we were long lost friends.

Jenny was having the time

Eskimo in Malaysia...

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the show was over Sept. 13, she decided to see a bit more before going back home.

"After all," she told me, "it was a bit late to start school anyway, and I decided I'd take my time getting back."

Jenny is a senior in elementary education at Alaska Methodist University. She expects to be graduated in May and wants to teach in a village next fall.

During the exposition in Osaka, the guides were kept busy 6 days a week and she saw very little of the country. When it was over, she made up for lost time—seeing everything she could during the next two weeks.

Next Jenny hopped on a ship, the S.S. President Cleveland, and headed to Hong Kong with a day's stopover in Taipei, Taiwan. In Hong Kong she went everywhere she could for two weeks, visiting Macao, Aberdeen, and every place that looked interesting.

By now a confirmed "sailor", she took passage on a Chinese ship to Singapore.

"It must have been a Communist ship," she surmised, "because there was a large picture of Mao on every deck." She didn't have time to worry about that because a typhoon trapped the ship in the harbor for five days and "I was never so seasick in my life."

By the time the ship reached Singapore Jenny was really feeling hungry for fresh fruits and juices and she spent a week there just drinking up the vitamins and shopping.

"There is so much to buy in Singapore and it's so clean that I just couldn't stop." By the time she spent all her money she was ready to take a bus to Kuala Lumpur, capital of Malaysia.

Further on in Penang, she met an Indonesian girl who was going up to Bangkok to look for a job and invited Jenny to come along.

So here we were on the train to Bangkok and Jenny was bubbling over with excitement about her travels.

"Travel has opened up a whole new world," she said, and now I want to travel more. I didn't know what I was missing.

Jenny often stays in youth hostels or student hotels and "this way I meet many people

when I travel," she said.

She was particularly enthusiastic about the Malaysian people who "are very friendly". She said they showed her many things she wouldn't see otherwise.

"Alaska is a magic word," she said. "To many people it is not a real world but rather a world of fantasy. They want to know if it really exists."

And Jenny tells them. "I'm very proud to be an Alaskan because Alaska gives a real good impression to people," she said.

Just as she and Peggy Hiebert (the other Alaskan hostess at Expo 70) "converted the four Japanese hostesses to Alaskans" at the Alaska pavilion in Osaka, everyone she meets in Malaysia wants to come to Alaska.

She has made many friends wherever she has gone and has a large address book full of names to take back with her.

Besides people, she met some animals at the zoo in Kuala Lumpur. It was the first zoo she had ever seen and was very excited about the elephants, giraffes, and monkeys.

She got even more excited about the Asian children. When the train stopped at a station in southern Thailand and she saw some very happy little children, she couldn't help saying, "These kids are so cute, I'd like to take one home with me."

When she started talking about home, Jenny got very enthusiastic. "I've been taking pictures like mad with my Instamatic—and sending postcards to relatives in Savoonga."

While in Japan she telephoned her mother in Nome.

"The call came in so clear it sounded as it were in the next room," Jenny recalled.

Her mother asked "Where are you?" and Jenny burst out laughing. It was hard to believe she was so far away.

But Jenny will be heading home soon.

After a week in Bangkok she planned to fly to Hong Kong to pick up the rest of her baggage, then spend a week in Japan. She didn't rule out the possibility of a side trip to Indonesia or the Philippines.

"But I'll definitely be home by Thanksgiving," she said—and with good reason. Everyone knows there's no place like Nome for the holidays.