

ARCTIC VILLAGE'S 'PIN' OUT-HUCKLEBERRYS 'FINN'



LONG WAYS FROM HOME—Pin is enjoying the Christmas rush in Rochester. Right foreground is Miss Barb Ester, one of Pin's escorts. Below, center picture, Pin is telling his Christmas wish to

Santa Claus. Bottom picture shows Pin greatly enjoying the big blowup of himself on a Fairbanks television station just before his big trip to Rochester.



'Pin' John Travels Clear to Rochester, N. Y. for Christmas

By JOHN METZGER

This is the story of a ten-year old Athabascan Indian boy's unforgettable Christmas vacation. In December, 1968, Abraham "Pin" John, Jr., travelled from his home in Arctic Village, Alaska to Rochester, New York, a round trip of nearly 10,000 miles.

The first time I met Pin was at the Fairbanks airport. He had just arrived in a small bush plane from his home in Arctic Village.

Arctic Village is the furthest north Indian community in the United States located approximately 250 miles from Fairbanks and 118 miles above the Arctic Circle.

This was Pin's first trip away from his remote and isolated community of 63 people. Now he was on his way to Rochester, New York, a city with a population of over 630,000.

Pin's trip to New York was arranged by Jim Ludwig, KUAC's Program Director at the University of Alaska, and Barb Ester, U of A student and fellow Rochesterian.

Ludwig met Pin during a visit to Arctic Village last fall while working on a documentary program for KUAC. Pin gave Ludwig his first dog-sled ride and the idea for taking Pin on a cultural enrichment trip to New York

emerged.

Through the generosity of U of A students, civic and service organizations in the Fairbanks area, and the Associated Students of the University of Alaska, Pin's trip became a reality.

Since I also live in the Rochester area, I became involved and tried to capture in photos Pin's initial reactions to many of the things we take for granted.

I'll never forget the excitement on his face the first time he talked on the telephone and rode in a car. I noticed that anything mechanical had great fascination for Pin.

In fact, during the entire trip, Pin was clicking away with a KODAK instamatic camera so he could share with his family and friends his experiences in the "outside world."

Finally, we returned to Fairbanks and it was time to say goodbye to Pin. As he boarded the plane for the return trip to Arctic Village, I'll never forget that last moment.

As he reached the door of the plane, Pin suddenly turned in our direction and gave a final wave.

His face seemed to radiate all the discovery, thrill, and excitement of that incredible journey—an adventure that would make Huckleberry Finn look like a stay-at-home.

All Photos by JOHN METZGER



AMUSEMENT AT SCHOOL—While in Rochester, Pin visited a school with other minority children.



FIRST PHONE TALK—Pin is enjoying the novelty of his first conversation on the phone in his life while coming through Fairbanks.