

BARROW

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New Barrow High School offers tradition of gathering in modern setting

By Bill Hess

Tundra Times

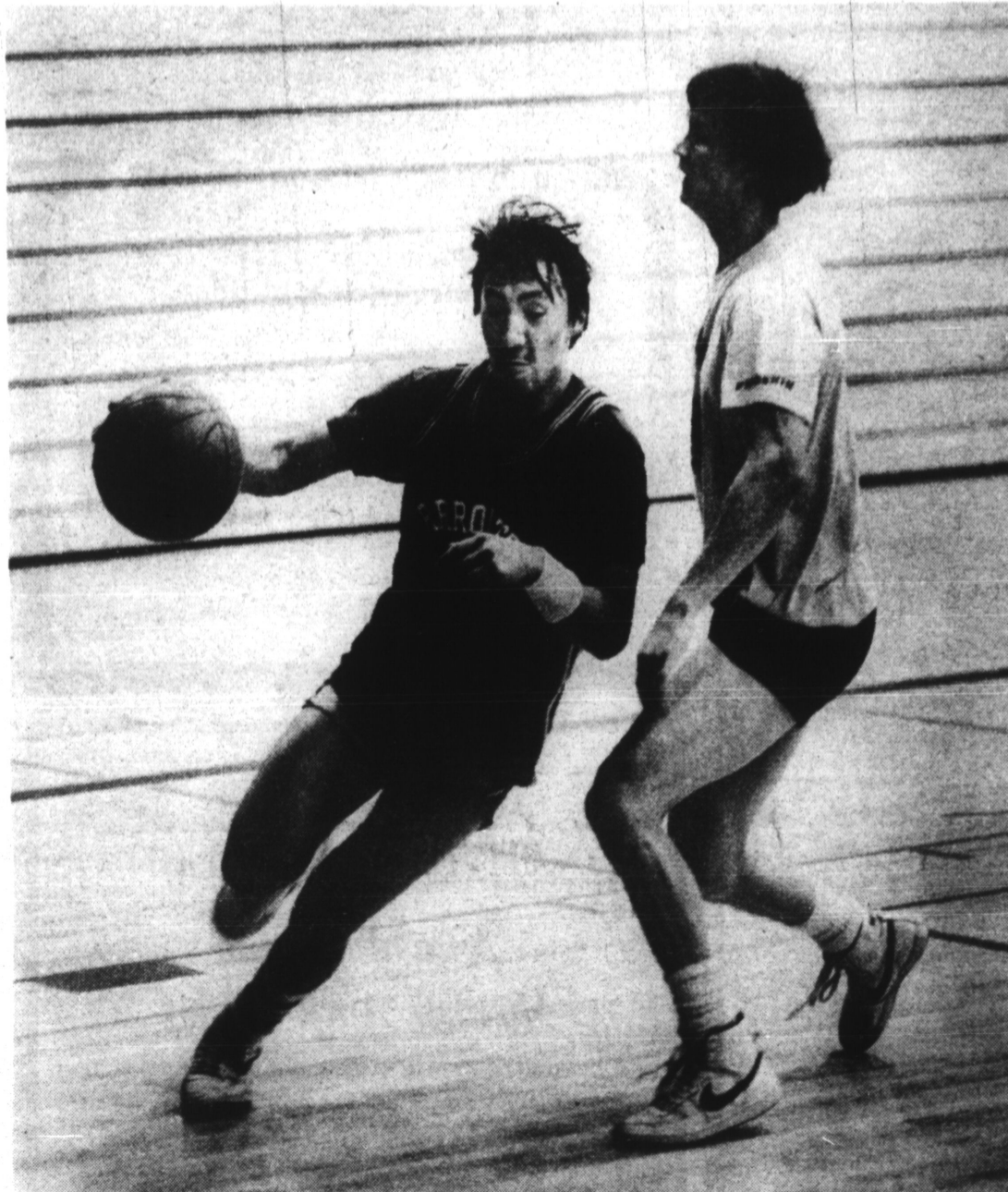
Outside, the mercury shrivels and shrinks until it huddles at 53 degrees below zero. Inside, sweat beads on Edward Solomon's face as he pushes heavy weights toward the ceiling in an effort to strengthen his muscles. Elsewhere in the same building, Leo and Eli Kaleak laugh as they frolic, splash and learn to swim in a heated pool.

Harvey Pannick gets grease on his fingers as he transforms a beat-up pickup truck which had seemed doomed to a frozen graveyard into a

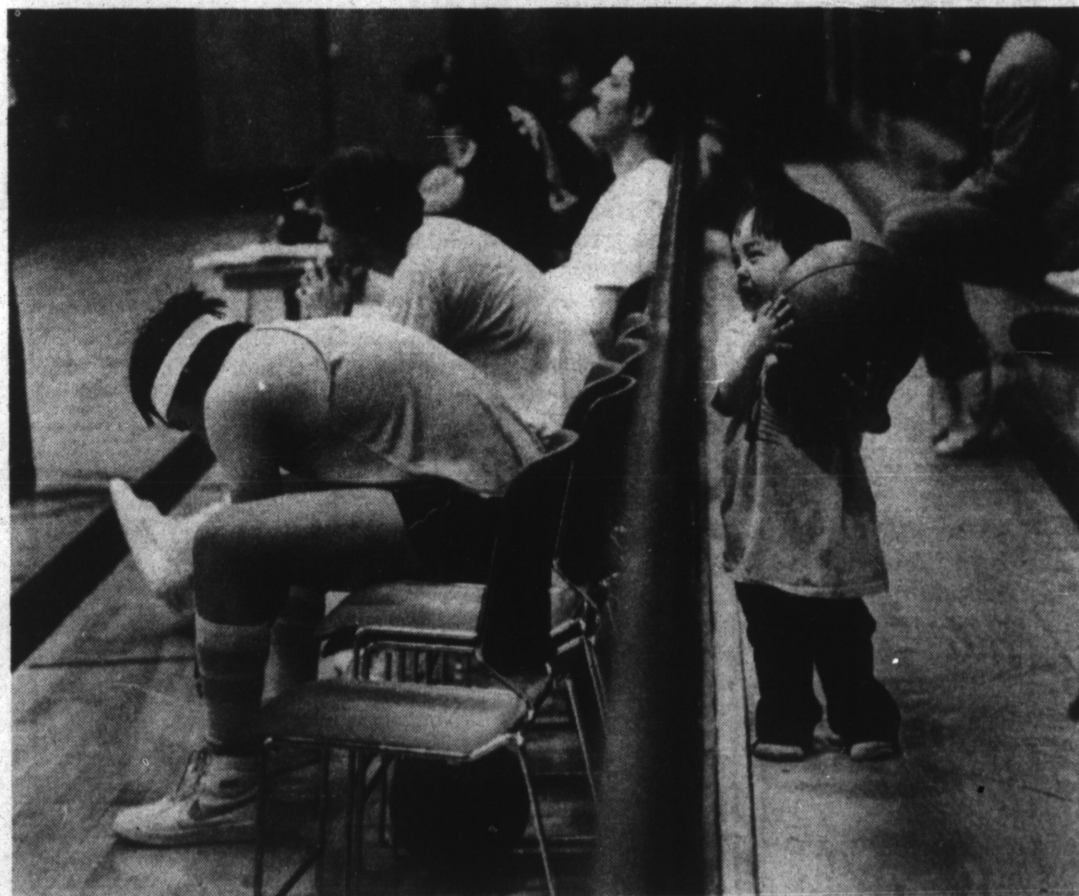
vehicle to cruise the streets of Barrow.

Traditionally, the Inupiat people of Alaska have always gathered together in a community center during the cold winter months to share each other's company and to pass the time away. In more recent times that tradition has been weakened as television and other influences from the western world have moved in to occupy time.

This past fall the new Barrow High School opened its doors to the students of America's farthest north city. The school cost the North Slope Borough approximately \$72 million to construct, and some 250 students attend.



Few activities are more popular in Rural Alaska than basketball. Two of the many mens' teams in Barrow battle it out in the gymnasium of the new high school.



Isaac Leavitt, two-and-a-half, tests his own skill as more experienced players occupy the court. Should Leavitt decide he needs to build his stamina, there is a jogging track above the gymnasium.

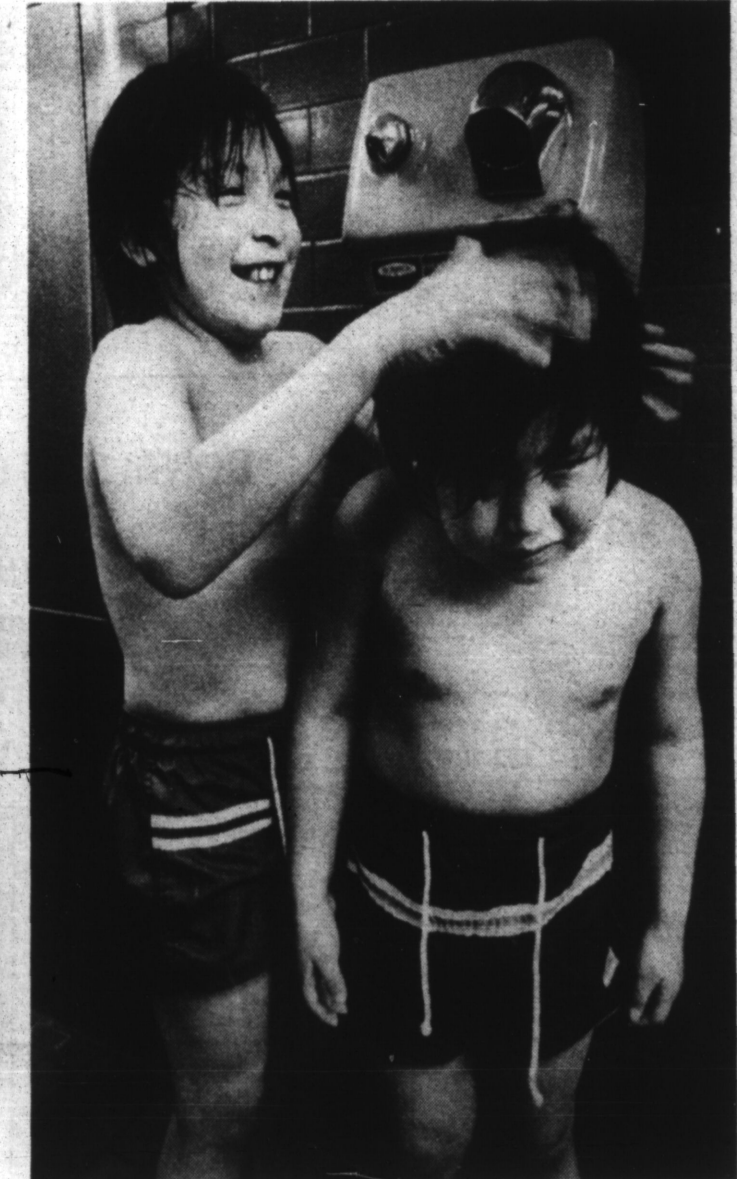
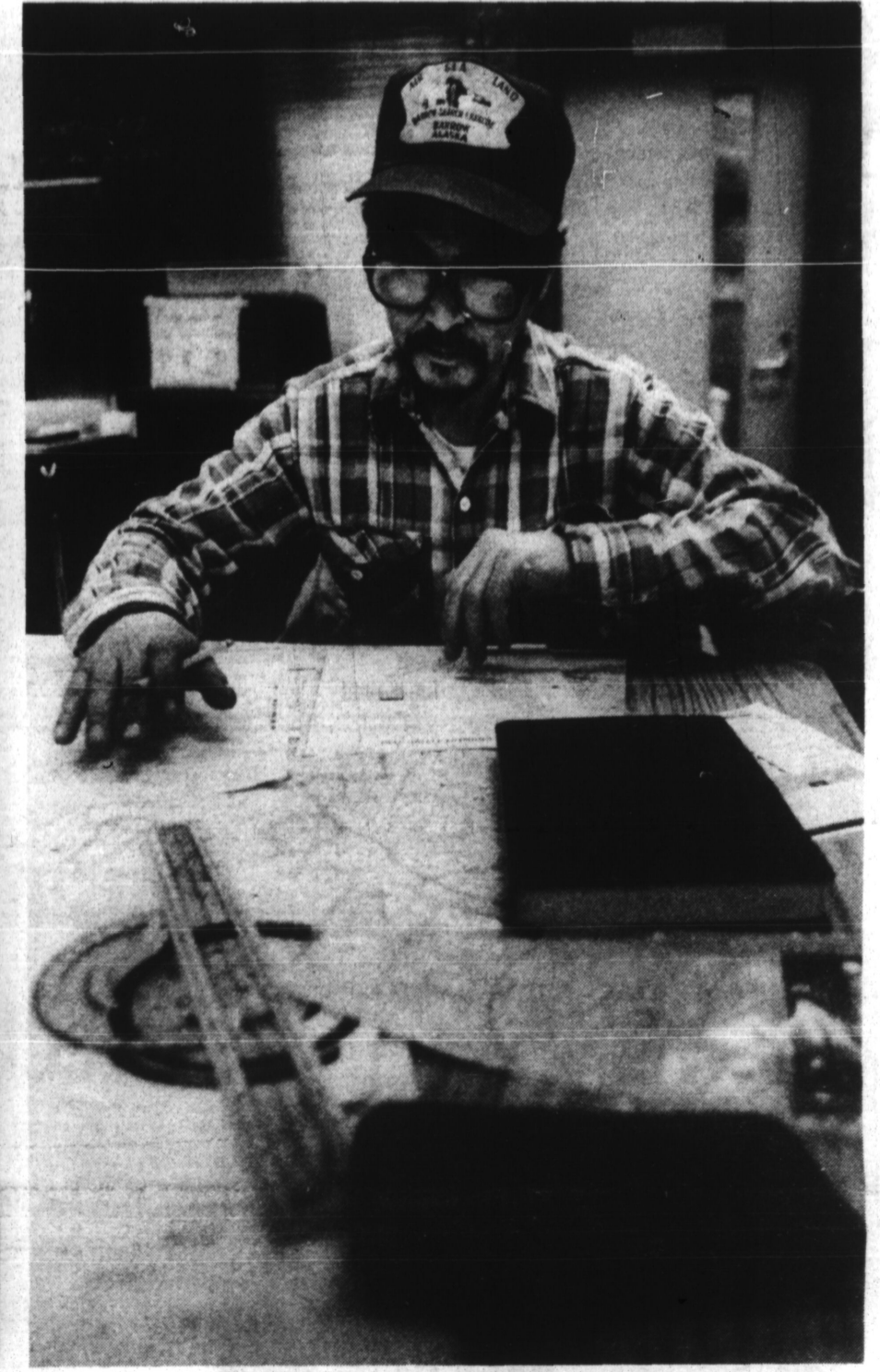


Strain shows on the face of Edward Solomon as an hour-and-a-half workout session nears end. "It's pretty new around here, lifting weights," Solomon says, adding he would probably be home watching TV if the high school facilities had not been opened up for free community use.



When the North Slope Borough's community education program in Barrow offered structured auto-shop classes, almost no one came. When they instead opened up the shop for community members to use as they wanted under the supervision of an expert mechanic, snowmachines, three-wheelers, cars and pickup trucks were brought in continually. "I like to drive around town in a truck, and now I'll have a truck to drive around in," Harvey Pannick explains his reason for using the new shop.

Photos by Bill Hess



"I've been driving a dog team, and then I started driving a ski-doo, the next thing I want to do is to fly an airplane," Leslie Itta, 47, explains his participation in a community education-sponsored ground school. "It's a lot faster transportation." Itta would like to see more Native people take advantage of classes such as the ground school. He makes use of the facility in other ways, such as repairing snowmachines and trucks. He also is pleased that his children have evening activities to participate in, especially swimming. "We never had that. I go out camping one time and I fall off the boat. I didn't know how to swim! I was almost a goner, until some of my friends grab me by the hair and pull me back in. With these kids learning to swim, it won't happen like that!" Leo Kaleak, left, helps his brother Eli to dry his hair after a round of swimming. When the pool first opened, so many people crowded into it it overflowed its sides. Now, swimming times have been divided into age groups, but good crowds still turn up.

PHOTOS BY BILL HESS