

# Driggs Quietly Trains at Arctic Health and Research Center

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Staff Writer

Sheldon Driggs, an eighteen year old Eskimo boy from Wainwright, moves quietly and confidently through laboratory tasks at the vast and impressive Arctic Health and Research Center on the University of Alaska campus.

Alternating his time between the environmental engineering branch, the bacteriology lab, and the virology lab, Sheldon is being trained in basic laboratory techniques.

At the same time, he is completing his high school education in an extraordinary program arranged by the Career Extension Center of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

Sheldon's story is a story of many community forces pulling together to help one very bright and exceptional young man.

His schooling is arranged through the Career Extension Center with the assistance of the University's tutorial service. His training is the outcome of the Native Laboratory Aid Program of the Arctic Research Center which is an extension of the U.S. Public Health Service.

Under special arrangements made through the Boarding Home Program, Sheldon lives on campus with the family of Dr. William Sackinger, a lively household since the Sackingers have six children of their own.

Spending money, important to any teenager, was arranged through the help of Leonard Hamilton at the Fairbanks Native Community Center. As part of the Work Experience Program, Sheldon is paid for the hours he puts in at the research laboratory.

The story is all the more remarkable because Sheldon was



SHELDON DRIGGS, laboratory trainee at the Arctic Health and Research Center on the University of Alaska campus, handles mice used in virology experiments with forceps and rubber gloves. The colony of mice must be kept highly sterile for responsive testing to viral injections.

very close to becoming one of the growing and alarming number of high school drop-outs.

Like many young people from bush areas, this young man had trouble relating to urban school life. After a dismal beginning at Lathrop, he was ready to give up and go home, and the BIA made arrangements to send him back.

Luckily one of the counselors at Lathrop referred him to Career Extension, presently located in a small building about a block

or two from Lathrop.

As you walk into the Center, a sign stops you at the door: "CAUTION, HUMAN BEINGS HERE, HANDLE WITH CARE."

Originally funded by federal grant but now supported by both the state and the borough, Career Extension is an experimental program designed to make school extend beyond the school walls, out into the community.

Irene Cleworth, the school's director, pointed out that today's young people are no longer buying the old concepts of education.

In more and more cases, the gap between the student's concept of the world and the world the school presents him with widens until, at last, a split occurs.

The student, frequently discouraged, sometimes angry, and often hostile, drops out.

Mrs. Cleworth believes that if you can make school make sense, the kids will buy it. If school can relate to the larger world outside, in a job, for instance, you have a better chance of keeping that child in school.

Every student at Career Extension is helped to find a job in the community. He then works at his own pace under teacher direction, with no fixed class schedules to meet. Night study is arranged for those with daytime jobs.

This was the concept applied to Sheldon's case, although Sheldon is an exceptional student in that he does not attend any classes at the Center. All of his studies are done under the direction of his tutor, Jim Toston, consulting with the staff.

In June, Sheldon will take the GED examination (General Education Diploma), a high school equivalency test. If he passes, this will entitle him to a high school diploma and open other doors.

Sheldon already has the tentative offer of two jobs upon completion of his training. His primary goal is to go back to Barrow to work at the Navy's Arctic Research Laboratory.

Jerry Morang, Career Extension's vocational counselor, has a great amount of faith in Sheldon.

"I think he has distinct leadership qualities," Morang said. "I have a feeling we will be hearing a lot more about this boy in the future. He wants

to have some kind of impact on his culture, and he knows he needs the tools to do it. His diploma and the training he is getting here are just the beginning."

Last year the Arctic Research Center took five trainees into the program, of which only two finished. This year Sheldon is the only trainee and has the luxury of being coached privately by some of the Center's top men.

Sid Heidersdorf, in charge of the Laboratory Aid training program, personally spends about one and a half hours a day with Sheldon. Of course, he pointed out, such one to one counseling is very expensive and felt that next year they would either have to drop the program or expand it.

He felt that Sheldon would have benefitted from a little more contact and exchange of ideas with young people, going through training at the same time.

In the past few months, Sheldon has had complete responsibility for a large colony of very pure mice used in virology experiments. Don Ritter, one of the scientists of the virology section, instructed Sheldon on all phases of these experiments, in which mice were injected with small quantities of virus and carefully observed for follow-up studies.

So critical is the sterility factor that the mice are handled only with forceps and rubber gloves. The entrance to the virology section is closed off by means of two doors with an air lock between. You cannot open the inner door until the outer has closed behind you.

Ritter was also instructing Sheldon in the use of tissue culture as another means of testing, demonstrating the procedures with small glass flasks containing vero tissue (African green monkey).

In the weeks to come, Sheldon plans to work in the large animal section, where studies are made using black bears, coyotes, dogs, wolves, sheep, fox, pigs and rabbits.

Sheldon's trapping skills were being put to use as he and a friend set traps near the campus for rabbits to be used in the experiments.

When asked what per cent of Career Extension students were Native, Jerry Morang said, "I'm not sure, about the same ratio as Lathrop, I'd say, about 20 per cent."

"Mostly," he added, "these are urban Natives." He explained that usually the bush kids who come in on the Boarding Home Program when they fail to work out at Lathrop, are often reacting to all school as a bad experience.

At Career Extension, no grades are given. There is work to be completed. When the student completes the work, he gets credit.

One student may take two weeks, another two months. "I think our students work harder than anyone else," Mrs. Cleworth said. "They have to."

Sheldon works a full eight hour day at the Arctic Research Center. After supper, he goes over to his tutor's and prepares for his GED examination.

"Some people have the idea that drop-outs are slow students," said Mrs. Cleworth. "This is not true. They are just average. In fact, we have some very bright students who just want to do it their way. And they're doing it."

Another poster on the wall at the Career Extension Center reads: "You are and we are ... a mystery."

Every child and every student is a unique being, full of as many mysteries as can be found under a laboratory microscope.

Sheldon Driggs is very definitely doing it his own way.

## Money for Regionals

In a telegram to leaders of the 12 Native Regional Associations, Senator Ted Stevens announced the Senate Appropriations Committee has reported a supplemental appropriations bill containing an advance of \$12,500,000 for the 12 Regional Native Associations established by the Alaska Native Claims Act.

In his announcement, Senator Stevens reported each regional association would be scheduled to receive \$1,000,000, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs would receive \$800,000 for its Native enrollment procedure.

The Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission is tentatively scheduled to receive \$125,000.

Senator Stevens cautioned the regional leaders that while this is an extremely important step, the bill must still pass the Senate and then go to conference with the House of Representatives.

The Alaskan Senator, a member of the powerful Appropriations Committee, has assured Alaskans he will make every effort to speed the implementation of the provisions of the 1971 Native Claims Settlement Act.

## LIKE GEESE...

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would rather have high school where he lives.

The cost of sending Alaska students to Mt. Edgecumbe or Beltz is between \$5000 and \$6000 per student per year. This money could be used to provide the student with an education in his own village without taking him away from his home and family.

"Whether or not a village has a BIA school, education is a state duty and the state must see that it is provided in every place," says Mr. Cooke.

Village residents and leaders are asked to contact Chris Cooke, Alaska Legal Services, Box 73, Bethel, Alaska 99559, or the closest Legal Services office for help in bringing their needs for local high school classes to the attention of the school officials.

Mr. Cooke also gives the name of Stanley Friese, Superintendent, State Operated Schools, 650 International Airport Road, Anchorage, Alaska, and recommends that villagers let Mr. Friese know their needs.

"Ten years ago," according to the DOE booklet on the Small High School, "when a village student applied for admission to high school, unless his test scores on culturally biased tests were high, he was told he was not high school material. Alaska is still paying the penalty for ignoring the education of Alaskan young people."

More and more, in growing numbers, these young people, like the students of Kivalina, will not be ignored.

## Classified

PLANNING DEVELOPER required by Rural Alaska Community Action Program. Requires extensive travel throughout rural Alaska identifying rural problems, mobilizing state & federal resources and familiarizing 9 regional development corporation staffs in the planning process. Send completed RURAL CAP, State of Alaska or SF 171 application to Personnel, RURAL CAP, Drawer 412 ECH, Anchorage, AK 99501. Recruitment closes May 31. Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Your Horoscope

By Jeane Dixon

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

Your birthday today: This is a year of experiment and abrupt impulses usually with some last-minute luck that makes things turn out all right. Emotional ties deepen. Today's natives are intrigued by all forms of magnetism, ranging from physical to psychic forms, usually skilled in its application.

Aries [March 21-April 19]: Try to simplify your work and your attitudes toward it. You may be wasting time and temperament on mere side issues.

Taurus [April 20-May 20]: Being rushed into anything is unlikely to make a difference in either direction. Rather, be the one who encourages others.

Gemini [May 21-June 20]: Old friends help you along, but somewhere during this busy day you come to conflict about what to do and where.

Cancer [June 21-July 22]: Varied discussions may run longer than you'd like, but are preferable to silent disagreements. The evening hours are rich with good feeling.

Leo [July 23-Aug. 22]: Your persuasive powers come to a peak according to how badly you want the results. Be sure you don't ask for too much.

Virgo [Aug. 23-Sept. 22]: You have an odd chance of reaching people at more profound levels than usual. Be candid with them.

Libra [Sept. 23-Oct. 22]: It is time to stand up for what you believe in. Compromises only create worse problems at a future date. Add something to your reserves.

Scorpio [Oct. 23-Nov. 21]: Carry on at yesterday's speed, without letting stressful news make you change directions. Fresh and interesting assistance is at hand.

Sagittarius [Nov. 22-Dec. 21]: Don't play games with whatever it is you're doing. Friends and acquaintances are better left out of preliminary stages.

Capricorn [Dec. 22-Jan. 19]: There is a practical limit to how hard and how long you can push vocation or business action. Rest, focus your energy on home and loved ones.

Aquarius [Jan. 20-Feb. 18]: If you can stay out of the front lines, long-standing issues can clarify. Your appeal to people in authority should be direct.

Pisces [Feb. 19-March 20]: Modest advances on all important personal projects are indicated. Keep your own counsel about any financial prospects.