

# ATTU BASKETRY IS AN ANCIENT ALEUT ART



**PRESERVING MATERIALS**—Grass used for basketry must be kept damp or it will become brittle. This dampened grass is being wrapped in Saran Wrap so that it will not dry out.

Aleut basketry, an ancient traditional art of the Aleut people, is not practiced very much in Alaska nowadays. However, Mrs. Anfesia Shapsnikoff has worked for many past years to keep the basketry tradition from extinction.

Last year, she traveled to several communities and the

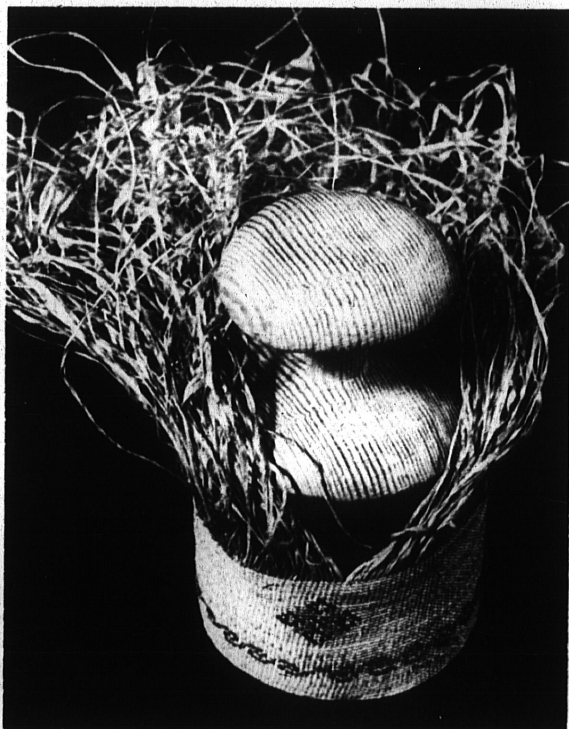
University of Alaska to demonstrate the traditional art of Aleut basketry. In these Aleut communities, she showed residents the various methods of choosing and preparing materials, finding the reeds from which the baskets are made, proper care of the fragile grasses.

During her stay at the Uni-

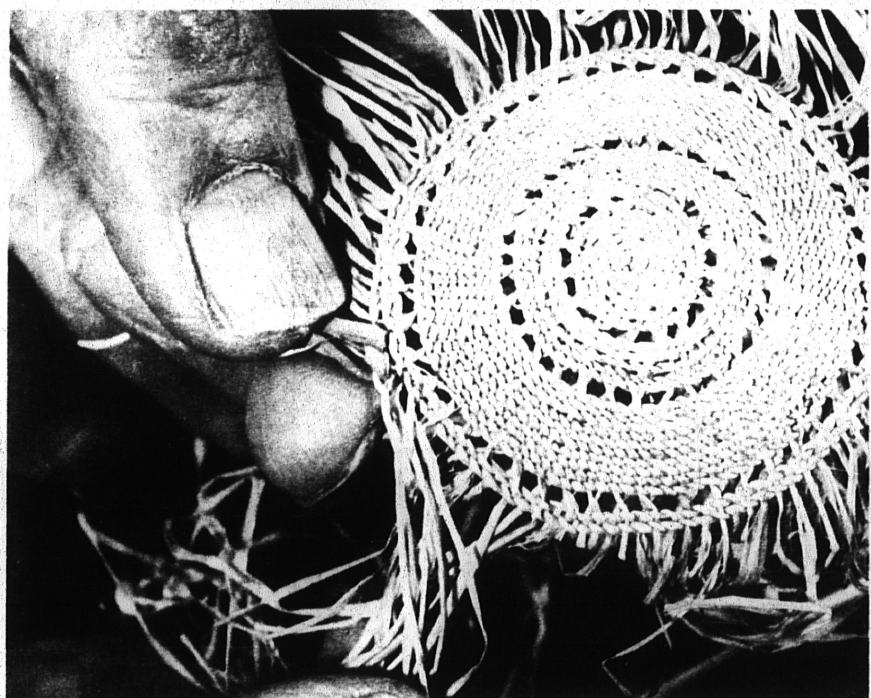
versity of Alaska, University Museum photographer Barry McWayne recorded the procedures Mrs. Shapsnikoff used in making her baskets. At the present time, portions of this photo series are on display at the University of Alaska Museum.



**BASKET MAKER**—Mrs. Anfesia Shapsnikoff selects a piece of grass for inclusion in a basket she is working on. In the background is the wooden mold she uses to build her basket around.

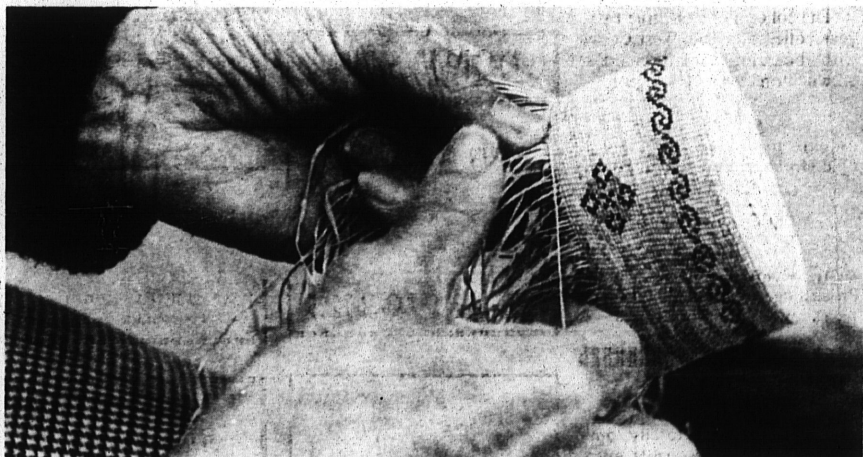


**SHAPED MOLD**—A wooden mold is kept in the basket when it is not being worked on to ensure that it retains its shape.



**CREATING DESIGN**—Mrs. Shapsnikoff demonstrates with a rubber band how the embroidery

thread is twisted over the grass to create a design on the outer side of the basket.



**BOTTOMS UP**—As the work progresses, Mrs. Shapsnikoff turns her basket over so as to have a clear view of what she is doing.



**WORKING BY TOUCH**—At this state, with strands and cross-strands scattered around the basket base, it is between the weaver's eyes and her hands. The weaving is done by touch.