

Nenana Mothers Start Wheels of Education For Head Start Tots

By LIBET JOHNSON

The Nenana Pre-School is on its way to what looks like a very successful second year. The local mothers have put the wheels of education well into motion for their four and five year olds.

The School gives the children a two year head start on the ways of the classroom, but in a less formal and demanding fashion.

The intent is not to push immediately into serious courses of study, but more to familiarize the child with the most basic experiences that he will have to deal with in primary school, such as how to handle one's self in a group, how to share and play together. To send a child into first grade already having experience with these things puts him at an immediate advantage.

The reports on the first sixteen graduates of the Pre-School, who are now enrolled in the first grade of the public school, are definitely promising.

The School goes further than this in preparing its children for first grade. Each child learns to spell and write the numbers, his own name and birthday, as well as say the colors when the teacher points them out and recite the pledge of allegiance.

The work involved, that used to make children balk and look around the room in disinterest, is well integrated into a variety of seeming games, songs and other projects.

The school tends toward a more progressive philosophy in that it is well aware that the best way to teach is not with an iron hand but with imagination and intuition.

At present, the School is housed in the Episcopal Parish Hall. Classes are held three days a week—Mon., Wed., and Fri.—from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The only cost involved is a \$1.00 a month charge for each child, which

helps to pay the teachers' salaries and for essential supplies.

Due to the interest and determination of the Nenana mothers, the school was successfully begun without outside funding. The finances are now supplemented by the Nenana Native Council, which donates the proceeds from one Bingo night a month, at which time the prizes are baked goods donated by the mothers.

The school relies mostly on donations for its toys and equipment. Some of its impressive toys were made as a project by the older students in the nearby public school.

As of this October the School has fifteen local mothers involved, who rotate as teacher aides. There is a certified teacher, Mrs. Agnes Gandrum, who comes in regularly. She is assisted by Sally Sedgwick, a young and vivacious teacher with a true knack for dealing with and drawing response from children.

The Parish Hall has a movable dividing wall that is used to make two separate classrooms for the fours and fives and is taken down for the recreation period, when all the children play together.

There is electricity and heat in the building, but there is no plumbing yet. Mrs. Edna Ketzler, President of the Mothers Meeting and driving energy behind the entire project, is hoping to find an interested benefactor in Anchorage, when she visits there in the near future. So far water is still brought in by hand and the traditional portable toilet is still used.

With its limited finances, the Nenana Pre-School is doing remarkable well. Education being the most important gift any child can receive in this competitive world, the Nenana community can be proud of its women and its struggling young school.

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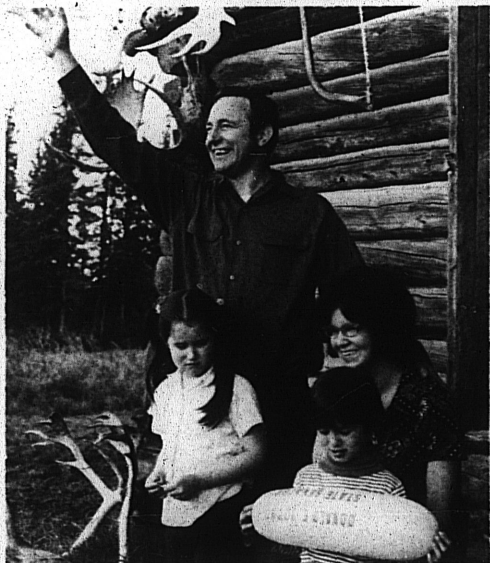
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