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Barrow Christmas, 1971

Summary created by: Summer Dougherty

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Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master copies on CD.

Series:

The congregation is singings hymns for the first 18 minutes of recording.

Next, Darrell Redfearn (?), pastor of the Inupiat Assembly of God in Barrow, speaks about Christmas activities of, not only the church, but of the village of Barrow as a whole.

Christmas in the church begins with church activities long before December 25th. Because Barrow is "so far off the beaten path as far as commercial enterprises are concerned" it is necessary for residents to think ahead at least six months in advance in order to have the necessary items on hand for the holiday season. So, Christmas preparations are begun in July, by ordering items from the outside. The church becomes involved in Christmas activities shortly after Thanksgiving in the rehearsals for musical numbers for the Christmas program and in the financial aspect of preparations of baskets and gifts and bags of candy.

The Sunday before Christmas is a very enthusiastic Sunday during the morning service. Each child, from the teenage years down gets a present. Most of the gifts are prepared by people on the outside in the division of the church called the Women's Missionary Societies. These women in various churches in the lower 48 buy presents with their own funds and wrap them. The missionary pastors then give these gifts to all the children in attendance. Surplus gifts are sent home to brothers and sisters and sometimes cousins who are not present. The Sunday before Christmas is also the day that Christmas treats are usually given out. The Sunday afternoon is a busy time with the practice of the smaller children in their parts in the Christmas program. As many as 200 children come together. They are lined up by age group and by grade in school. They try to have a part for every child who is interested in being part of the Christmas program. On Monday afternoon, there is another practice for younger children and then during the late evening, there is the final practice with the adults in the play; a dramatization of the Christmas story with a contemporary theme. On the Tuesday before Christmas this year in Barrow, was the annual banquet of all adult church members. A meal of turkey and dressing is served. Pie and vegetable salads are served. It is a candlelight dinner and traditional Christmas decorations are put up for this banquet. This was served in the annex, or the old church building, in Barrow. The adults had a good time and took pictures and made tape recordings to send Christmas greetings to other villages. There are events for children and teenagers at various times during the week.

Thursday evening before Christmas this week was the big night as far as the church is concerned. It was the night of the annual Christmas program. The program is in the Inupiat language. It began with the little children giving a welcome to all the people in the auditorium. The various age groups gave their parts. The adult portion of the program consisted of a family scene set on the church platform. The Christmas tree was there and being decorated by a family while the father was still at work. Father comes home and sees the small gifts under the tree and the decorations and became very upset at the expense represented by the lights and the tree and the gifts. He then says that he doesn't want to go to church for the Christmas program as he already goes to church once, maybe twice, a week and he doesn't want to go just to hear some little children say their parts. After the children and the wife leave to go to the program, the father starts listening to the radio. When the radio is turned on, another set of curtains is opened. The children sing a song as if it is coming from the radio. The father turns the radio off after the song. He is agitated by the Christmas song. He puts a record on. Again, another curtain opens and the children sing another song. Again the father is agitated by the Christmas song. He puts a tape on only to find that it is a tape of the Sunday service. Again the second curtain opens and the children sing another song. The father gives up on the tape player, turns the lights down low and sits down in his easy chair and goes to sleep. When he is asleep, an angel, played by one of the church ladies, appears to him and wakes him up. At first he is scared. The angel says that God is looking down on him and is disappointed in his attitude toward Christmas. The angel explains to him the true meaning of Christmas, telling him about the angels appearing to Elizabeth, then to Mary and then about Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem, the shepherds in the field, the wise men, and the baby Jesus in the mangers. All of these scenes were played out behind the angel and the father. This was accompanied by Christmas music in Inupiat. The last scene was of a repentant father who had found the true meaning of Christmas for his own personal life.

The tape cuts out. (Continued in 02-00-133 PT.1)