

88-49-147

Helen Napoleon talks about Hooper Bay

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Fairbanks, Alaska

1978

Series: Potlatch series

Song by Tom Rush

Jeff Kennedy said that the first runner up for the Miss Alaska Universe Pageant and a student at the University of Alaska is Helen Napoleon. She describes her home town of Hooper Bay.

Helen Napoleon said Hooper Bay village has a population of between 700 and 800 people and it is on the coast. It is west of the Kuskokwim. It is considered to be the largest village on the coast of Alaska. They have just built a high school when she left for college. There are other students from neighboring villages attending high school with a boarding home program. The school used to be run by BIA but the state has bought them out and it is a state school.

Jeff Kennedy asked what language the people in Hooper Bay speak. Helen said they speak Yupik and English, but it tends to go more towards Yupik. She said the three and four year old children tend to speak more in Yupik. They may speak English mixed with Yupik with their parents.

Kennedy asked if Hooper Bay was going to be hooked up with television. Napoleon said she thought it was already. She thought the people liked it. It is something else to do besides going to the movies and staying at home. They think that if a family doesn't have a television they might go somewhere else to view a television. She is positive about having television in the village since it keeps kids out of mischief. Kennedy asked about kids getting into mischief. Napoleon said just like regular kids they get bored and go out and get into mischief.

Kennedy asked if people are still involved with subsistence activities. Napoleon said yes it is mostly fishing for dog salmon, hunting seals and herring. King salmon is used more as an income fish. The North Star (supply ship) buys king salmon from the fishermen. They have three stores in Hooper Bay. People order clothing from catalogs. Kennedy asked her how often they have plane service. Napoleon said weather permitting they have planes every day. She talked about the different bush plane companies coming into Hooper Bay. They also have freight planes.

Kennedy asked about the radio stations they had in Hooper Bay. Helen said they have KYUK which is out of Bethel and KNON. They can get Anchorage and Fairbanks occasionally.

Song by Tammy Wynette

Helen Napoleon describes her high school days at St. Mary's. She said it is about 800 miles away. She would come home two or three times a year. She attended St. Mary's for three years and graduated in 1974. She started out as a sophomore. They offered freshmen courses at Hooper Bay. She like attending St. Mary's school. It was a good preparatory high school. It is a very small school and everyone works together. It was more like a family atmosphere. You are expected to spend a lot of your time studying. It is a challenging high school. They offer Latin. He said it is geared toward preparing students toward college. Students that graduate from her high school go on to college. She found it helpful when she started college at UAF. Kennedy asked her what kind of changes she had to deal with when she first came to the University of Alaska. She said it was a lot bigger than St. Mary's and you were on your own. She talked about living in Wickersham dorm. Kennedy asked her about her plans to get into law. Napoleon said she plans on getting into corporate law. She plans to return to Alaska after law school. She feels that there will be a need for lawyers in the corporations. Right now land claims will continue on for several years before everything is established. She wants to be somewhere where she can help most. She doesn't have exact plans for employment at this point. She will probably practice in the western region. She said it would be convenient to be in Anchorage or Fairbanks. She wouldn't mind living outside of a larger city.

Song by Kenny Rankin

Jeff Kennedy said he and Helen Napoleon talked about the Miss Alaska Universe Pageant. Helen said she was surprised coming in at first runner up in the competition. She didn't envy the judges. She said she will learn a lot from it and she will do things that she normally doesn't do. She talked about her responsibilities as first runner up. She thinks it is a big responsibility. It takes a lot of her time. She talked about getting into the pageant. She was asked to represent the World Indian Eskimo Olympics. She thought the process would take too much time. She said they prepared for the pageant the whole week. She encouraged other people to run for the pageant for the experience.

Song by Jerry Reed