

Knowledge of Native Elders ANS 401  
Edward and Margaret Penatac  
Summary by Bernice Joseph

Notes for September 27, 1988

Today, Edward showed a picture of King Island, which was taken in June. This photo was taken in 1964 when he and his brother-in-law went out hunting. He pointed out the school which was built in 1927 and closed in 1959 due to fears of an avalanche destroying a part of the village. There was also a national guard armory house there which was also removed from the island.

There were three clubhouses on the island where the men worked on their skins, women did laundry, and where kids sometimes played.

Today, King Island is only used as a hunting ground. No one lives there now.

Traditionally, the houses were made out of walrus skins, usually 8 x 10 ft in size and heated by seal lamps. In the spring time, the skins had to be changed with fresh ones. Later, people built lumber houses which were insulated with grass.

Umiaks are also made with walrus skins. The women keep busy sewing the skins together. A hunting boat is usually made with five walrus skins. Those boats can hold up to 26 people or more.

Edward said that he was in the army for 22 months. He lived down in the Aleutian Islands for 14 months.

When asked about whether or not there were healers in the village, they replied that the teachers usually helped the people. Before the teachers, there was no one on the island to help the sick, as a result, many died.

Back to the pictures, an old newspaper. On the front, there are two men carrying inflated seal pokes. These were used for hunting seals and walruses. Edward says that the seal pokes, when inflated with air was attached to a harpoon point. It was used to make the animal weak and keeps it from sinking.

What did the children do for entertainment? They mainly played down on the shore ice in the wintertime and in the clubhouses once it got too cold to play outside. They were taught to work when they were old enough.

A game Margaret recalled was the seal bone and the beads game. There were two team, and the object of the game

was to see who could get the beads in the seal bone the fastest.

Who taught you to Eskimo dance and Sing? It was passed from generation to generation. Edward doesn't like to dance.

Does any of your grandchildren speak your native tongue? About half of his kids do. The others sort of lost interest when they moved to Nome.

Do you miss your native food? Very much. We still use seal oil in our beef stew. They also eat a lot of store bought whitefish. They get their native foods once in a while from relatives in Nome.