

Alaskan Statehood Time

Brown Sociologist Heard News Late

By EDWARD B. POWELL

Alaska turned from a territory to a state this summer beneath the feet of a Brown University sociologist and his party—but most Americans received the news days before the researchers.

This was disclosed yesterday by Dr. James L. Giddings, Brown University associate professor in sociology and director of the Haffenreffer Museum of the American Indian in Bristol.

The doctor, trim and windburned, returned last week from his latest exploration trip in Alaska with his son, James, II, and two Brown students, William Simmons, 3rd of Providence, a museum assistant for two years, and Terrell Robinson, who is entering his freshman year at Brown.

Above Arctic Circle

First exploring the interior of Alaska back in 1934, Dr. Giddings and the group the past summer visited beach areas above the Arctic Circle in Kotzebue Sound on the west side of Alaska where all was quiet when Alaskans were kicking up their heels over statehood in the capital, Juneau, and in the cities of Anchorage and Fairbanks.

Excusing himself for not possessing more first hand knowledge of how old sourdoughs greeted statehood when the Senate passed the statehood bill on June 30 and when Alaskans gave their thumping endorsement on Aug. 26, Professor Giddings said where he was "News meant very little . . . We did not miss it."

He said after statehood had become common knowledge is about the time he first heard the news.

OK With Eskimo

"I asked an Eskimo if he thought it would be a good thing," Dr. Giddings said.

"Oh, it will be good," the Eskimo told Dr. Giddings.

"What difference will it make in your life?" Dr. Giddings continued to query.

"I will be able to vote for President," the Eskimo informed Dr. Giddings.

The slim professor with a slow smile said he became most cognizant of Alaskan statehood when he was about to return home, concluding a trip which began last June.

A few hours before departing down the Alcan Highway, he delivered a paper in Fairbanks before the 10th annual session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at the University of Alaska. "Professors of all fields of course spoke quite often of Alaskan statehood, but in no great detail."

Professor Giddings said, however, that it was the general opinion among professors that statehood was a wise move.

Actually, the Brown professor has been witnessing the handwriting on the wall for years and perhaps, because he has returned to Alaska at intervals, he understands better than most Alaskans just how much Alaska has progressed.

The Alcan highway has been tremendously improved—"enough for six cars side-by-side," Dr. Giddings indicated.

Vast oil reserves promise to bring a financial boon to Alaskans and persons migrating there.

Boom in Farms

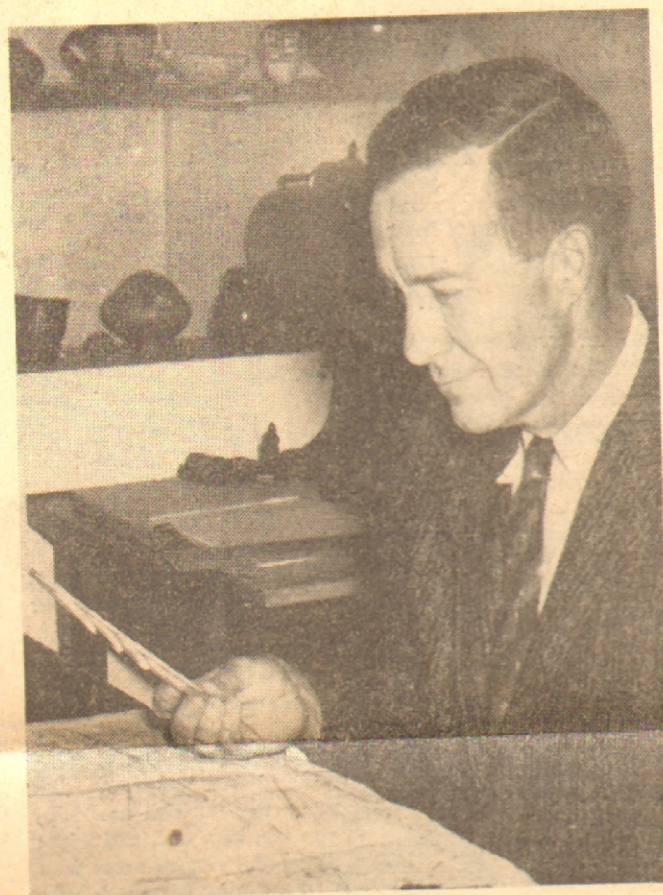
Over a period of 24 years farms have mushroomed along the approaches to southern Alaska. "Hundreds of miles of expansion, lush wheat fields," Dr. Giddings said.

Although he said he does not want persons to get the romantic notion that he is an explorer in deep wilderness, nevertheless, Dr. Giddings when he first traveled to Alaska in the 30's said very few Eskimos spoke English and if they did "they mixed it with their native tongue."

Asked if he needed an interpreter in explorations into some of the reaches of Alaska now, Dr. Giddings said "never. Their English is improving. There are several natives in the legislature in Juneau and many more Eskimos are enrolled in the University of Alaska."

Typical of the modern outlook taken by some Eskimos toward politics is the experience Dr. Giddings had while trying to interview a time-worn old Alaskan two years ago.

His wife was stirring a pot



A 1,200-year-old Eskimo spear is used by Dr. James L. Giddings as a pointer as he describes Alaska.

—State Staff Photo

and the radio was blaring. The interview ceased when the news broadcast came on the air. As the commentator spoke of the Stevenson-Eisenhower campaign, the old man, according to Dr. Giddings, became violently excited, dancing and waving his hands.

Professor Giddings quickly learned the Eskimo was a Stevenson man. "That was a sign of things to come," the professor said.

He said where it was the general rule once for Alaskan

in the Kotzebue Sound and witnessed several of the days for which Alaska is called the "Land of the Midnight Sun." They actually follow the route around the sound established in 1817 by the Russian Otto Von Kotzebue, skipper of a sailing expedition.

Many of the locations around the sound are named after his crewmen. Places like Shishmaref, Sparrow, Chamiso, the expedition artist Krusenstern, and others.

natives to attend school to grade levels three and four, now most are completing high school and plenty go on for college.

The group while exploring