

Volume 1, Issue 1

WINTER 2004



Our Journey Together as Orthodox Christians
In Community

THE LONG WAY HOME

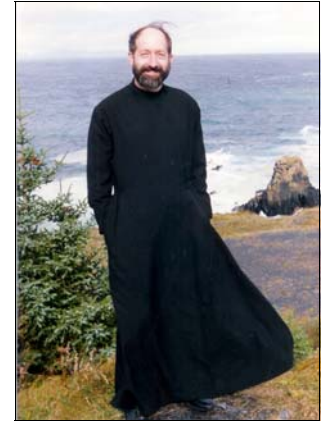
By Father Marc Dunaway

Editor's note: Fr. Marc Dunaway's essay seemed to us a fitting introduction to the inaugural issue of this newsletter. The spiritual roots which he describes are shared in a general way by many, though certainly not by all, in his parish. Alaska is a place of immigrants, and, though we at St. John's are fortunate to live in the land evangelized by St. Herman, we are not counted among either the "Russian" or "Native" Orthodox faithful. Our cultural roots make our journey different, although the destination is identical. Our aim in this publication is to tell our story, to describe our life in

spiritual and physical community, and, through it all, to give glory to God.

We all have a story that defines us.

This is not the same as a history of our life, which would begin with a date and place of birth and then move chronologically through the other facts and events of our life. It is instead a story that resides in our heart, resonating in our subconscious, telling us who we are in the world and how we fit in. This story develops and becomes clearer as we grow older, and other people help us refine it and perhaps even affirm that we have



Father Marc Dunaway, Pastor Saint John Orthodox Cathedral

got it right. This inner story has a powerful influence on all our actions, thoughts and decisions, as it

(Continued on page 4)

THE TRIUMPH OF OUR LADY OF PORT ARTHUR

by Mary Alice Cook

In 1994, soon after the reopening of Russia to the world, two St. John's parishioners, at the invitation of Bishop Arkadi of Sakhalin Island, traveled to the Russian Far East. Dan Kendall and his daughter, Andrea, flew from Anchorage to Khabarovsk, and then on to Yuzno-Sakhalinsk, the capital city of Sakalin Island. This island, one-half of which was occupied by the Japanese from 1904 to 1944, is located off the eastern coast of Russia and north of Japan.

While visiting the newly reestablished Orthodox Churches on the island, Dan and Andrea became acquainted with Fr. Roman Medvedev, then a newly ordained priest serving three



new churches. The paint was not yet dry on his buildings, which had been converted from a house, a school and an office building. Fr. Roman spoke some English and Andrea spoke some Russian. With Fr. Roman's help, they were able to communicate with the Orthodox Christians on the island. Fr. Roman, in turn, visited Alaska and St.

John's parish in 1995.

Fr. Roman now serves in Vladivostok at The Triumph of Our Lady of Port Arthur Cathedral, which was founded at Pascha in 2003. The icon for which the cathedral is named has an intriguing history. Written in 1903, on the eve of the Russian-Japanese War, it depicts Mary, the Mother of God, holding a shroud, which bears the image of Christ. She is standing on two swords, with the blue inlet waters and sky behind her. The icon is a message of peace, reminding us that God is more powerful than war. If the icon reached Port Arthur before war with Japan started, the story goes, there would be peace.

Port Arthur and Manchuria, in 1903, were occupied by Russia under a lease

(Continued on page 6)

Community Cooks

Part of the charm of a community cookbook is getting to know the “author” of a recipe. Grammy Phyl Webster moved into our community in 1974 to be near her son and daughter-in-law, Tom and JoAnn Webster, and their family. A house was built for her – right behind the Big House – and she opened her home when there were not enough beds for the young people there. She moved with Tom and JoAnn to California for a few years, returning to Alaska when they wanted to be near the grandchildren. Tom built a home, which Grammy Phyl shared until her repose on February 12, 1992. Phyl had a delightful British accent and charmed us all with her wit and wisdom. She never turned down an opportunity to go fishing and would spend a weekend alone on the Russian River if it meant she could spend it fishing. She often shared her special cookies with us and now her great great grandchildren are enjoying them too.

Grammy Phyl's Molasses Cookies

¾ c. shortening or margarine
2 t. baking soda
1 c. sugar
½ t. cloves
¼ c. molasses
½ t. ginger
1 egg
1 t. cinnamon
2 c. flour
½ t. salt
Cream together shortening and sugar. Beat in egg and molasses. Mix in flour and spices. Chill at least 30 minutes. Form chilled dough into balls and roll each in granulated sugar. Flatten each ball on cookie sheet. Bake at 375 for 8-10 minutes. Note: Store in covered tin with a slice of bread and they will stay soft.

To order a copy of our cookbook, *Welcome Home*, please contact Maye Johnson email:crancliff@alaska.com; or call or fax 907-696-3326. Price is \$18 and includes shipping.



In Community is published by: Mary Alice Cook, Barbara Dunaway, Maye Johnson, Sally Eckert, Harold Davis, Dan Kendall, Jennie Gilquist
We welcome your comments. You may contact us at:

Saint John Orthodox Cathedral
P.O. Box 771108
Eagle River, Alaska 99577
E-mail: stjohnalaska@aol.com
Web site:
<http://www.stjohnalaska.org/>

Outpost of the Kingdom

A Commentary by Kh. Barbara Dunaway

“Who are these people and what are they doing?” Eudora Welty, author

It was a search for the truth – the truth about the church, about worship, even about theology – that motivated our journey. I had been along for the ride because my husband was one of the “out-front” players in the movement. He and other men, who were called to the evangelical ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, began more than thirty years ago a serious search to discover where to take their converts and followers. They discovered, through the study and devotion of some very bright fellows, the Eastern Orthodox Church. This discovery led to a determined effort to be accepted as priests, deacons and laypersons in this grand, ancient Christian faith. A visionary Archbishop of the Antiochian Orthodox Church brought us into the Church through baptisms and chrismations. This man, a decisive leader, met with my husband and

other men and agreed to “take us in.” He said, “Welcome home,” and became as a father to our seeking souls.

We in the Alaskan crew of that search found ourselves already living in the fertile soil of Orthodoxy. Though this fact is obviously of great benefit, it also has presented problems we had not anticipated. As time passed – much to our surprise and caught unaware because of our own naiveté – we discovered that some Orthodox did not always share the joy we had. Our acceptance by other Orthodox groups and individuals was sometimes not wholehearted. This was likely due to the fact that there was no precedent of such a group of Christians being received *en masse* into the Church.

Granted, being ex-Protestants, we had much to learn about the practice of Orthodoxy, but we were and are more

than willing to learn everything we can about this great “pearl” of worship and faith. We have come to understand that our learning will be a lifelong process.

So, we at St. John’s have come together from many places and varied

“We in the Alaskan crew of that search found ourselves already in the fertile soil of Orthodoxy.”

backgrounds. We hope for encouragement and acceptance for what we are. As the scripture says, we who believe are “accepted in the beloved.” And to the fainthearted Christ also said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Thus, in this journal, we will tell stories by and about our people gathered here in Eagle River, Alaska. And in the telling, perhaps you, the reader, will see that this work – this community of Orthodox faithful – is a work of God and not of man.

Community Books

Recommendations and Reviews by some of our parishioners.

Jan Vedder's Wife

by Amelia E. Barr; Dodd, Mead & Company, New York; 1885.

A Review by Mary Alice Cook

Some years ago, my husband, who has a knack for such things, discovered, in a used book store, a small hardback novel by a long-forgotten author. *Jan Vedder's Wife*, written in 1885 by a young widow who turned to writing to support her children, is out of print but worth the search. Amelia Barr was a best-selling author of her day, and among a long list of novels she published at the turn of the last century, *Jan Vedder's Wife* may be the most enduring. It has become a favorite of readers and reading groups in our community.

Set in the mid-nineteenth century, in a tiny fishing village in the Shetland Islands, *Jan Vedder's Wife* is, very simply, the story of a marriage. Jan, a handsome but unlucky fisherman, marries Margaret, the proud daughter of Peter Fae, the local rich man. Margaret is smart, energetic and thrifty. She keeps an immaculate house – provided and furnished by her troublesome father and a source of tension in the marriage - and her desire is to be ruler over it. Jan is a loveable, well-meaning charmer. His great desire is that his wife will accept him and the love he offers her. Their story is one of a contest of wills, of a heartbreaking separation, and their efforts, aided by sympathetic friends, to bridge the distance between them.

The Shetlands, a group of rugged, windswept islands off the coast of northern Scotland, is a land that bears more than a passing resemblance to Alaska. Mrs. Barr describes the Shetland summer as “that short interval of inexpressible beauty.” But winters are drearily long and challenging to the spirit. Margaret, in her unhappiness, realizes what many Alaskans learn, that “when they are in trouble, the weather is usually their enemy.” The village of Lerwick, reliant on the sea for its living, is also reminiscent of a small Alaskan community. The good minister who aids both Jan and Margaret in their distress; the rowdy fishermen who hang out in the tavern between voyages and act as a sort of Greek chorus; the saucy Suneva Torr, Margaret’s rival first for Jan’s and then for her father’s affections – all her characters become colors that Mrs. Barr uses to paint a portrait of village life.

Jan Vedder's Wife would probably be lightly regarded by today’s literary critics. It is set firmly in what we call the “Victorian” tradition, full of warnings about women who usurp authority from husbands. Peter Fae counsels Jan that “a woman must find her pleasure in the thing that pleases her husband,” and Jan’s faithful friend Snorro, a confirmed bachelor, observes “where the devil cannot go, he sends a woman.” But the reader who looks beyond the outmoded speech and occasional platitude will find a timeless story of love and redemption, of a couple who discover in the martyrdom of marriage a path to holiness.

(Available at: bookfinder.com and abebooks.com.)

“...in true marriage the wife must give as well as take - give love and forbearance, and help and comfort.”

Blood Brothers

by Fr. Elias Chacour with David Hazard

Chosen Books, a division of Baker Book House Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1984.

A Review by Sally Eckert

Fr. Elias tells the story of his life from the days of his childhood in Canaan through his vocation as a Melkite (Byzantine Rite Catholic of the Middle East) priest in Galilee today. Born in a time of peace between Muslim, Jewish and Christian neighbors, he describes some of the events that contributed to the unrest of today’s Middle East. Fr. Elias utters a cry from the heart for reconciliation between his beloved Palestinians and Jews. Educated in Paris, this humble man of Galilee holds a doctorate and speaks eleven languages. If reading a book is analogous to taking a journey with its author, I heartily recommend you take this tour. I found my historical perspective both corrected and sharpened through contact with my literary companion.

Not only do we at St. John’s share Fr. Elias’s Christian heritage through our Antiochian Archdiocese, but there is also another personal touch: his interview with Jim Forest, a recent lecturer at our Eagle River Institute, was published in *Sojourner’s* magazine under the title, “Children of Ishmael in the Promised Land.” Fr. Elias continues his work today, hoping to “change hearts, not simply institutions.” His ventures are “bold, often risky...” and you will not regret becoming acquainted with this man whose prayers are transformed into courageous acts in a setting of violence, hardship and mistrust.



Community Books, continues on page 5

THE LONG WAY HOME continued from page 1



Saint John the Evangelist Cathedral Eagle River, Alaska

is the lens through which everything outside of us passes to become the reality we see in our heart. The story of my spiritual ancestry helps to illumine the journey of my family from England, to Kentucky, to Alaska.

My ancestors were Christians in the English Church. Before the Revolutionary War, they sailed in wooden ships with tall masts to the eastern shores of America and made their homes in Pennsylvania. When Daniel Boone traveled south and ventured through the Cumberland Gap, they journeyed with him and built for themselves log homes in Kentucky. They founded Methodist churches, and one even rode on horseback as an itinerant preacher. Occasionally they intermarried with Indians; sometimes they fought with them in terrible battles. They transformed forests into farmlands and changed forts into towns.

Later, one of my ancestors was shot by a Civil War sniper. Later still, some went to Europe to fight the Germans in World War I. Through it all, they prayed to God and gathered with their neighbors under large tents to sing and hear Christian preachers call them to holiness. They dedicated their lives to God, even as they hid behind barns to smoke tobacco. They wept together in church cemeteries as they buried the wives and mothers who died in childbirth.

As a young man, I traveled back to Kentucky and would sometimes retrace my ancestors' footsteps and try to imagine how they lived. I would sit beside my grandmother in her church and sing, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood," as the portly song leader waved his arms and the deacon's wife poured her soul into the piano.

My father left Kentucky for a time after enlisting to fight in World War II. He left a second time, taking my mother and we three kids with him when he moved to Missouri to attend a Bible Baptist Seminary. Eventually, we moved to California to join Campus Crusade for Christ. I was older then and got to stay up late the night my parents opened the sealed envelope that announced their first assignment. "Alaska," it said. "Anchorage, Alaska." So we raised money and piled our-

selves into a Rambler station wagon and set off on a great adventure.

We drove to Alaska on the gravel highway constructed by the U.S. military during World War II. It was winter and when we arrived in Anchorage, my father had \$17.00 in his pocket. No one in those days had credit cards. But God had brought us to Alaska safely and my father set out to tell others about the grace and goodness of God. "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," he told them. "There is inside every man a God-shaped vacuum that only Jesus Christ can fill." We built a house and held Bible studies in our living room.

Here my story takes a significant turn. Across the street from our house was a partially constructed Russian Orthodox Church. We stared out our living room window one night and saw people, led by a priest, walking around their church, lighted candles in their hands. Bells clanged on and on. "What kind of cult is this?" we asked ourselves. They, it turns out, also looked out some nights at the cars crowding the street for our Bible study and shook their heads and asked, "What kind of cult is this?"

Our relations with these "Russians" were friendly and we understood that in some sense we were both missionary families. Still, we were very different. We had, after all, come to this Anchorage street from opposite directions on the globe. We read the same Bible and prayed to the same Christ, but we were worlds apart.

We began to discover that Protestants had lost continuity with the Church that had been since the beginning of Christian time.

My family lived in that house for two years and then moved to a large house in Eagle River, north of Anchorage. There we started a church. Our song leader, unlike the man I remembered in Kentucky, sat down and played a guitar while we clapped and made a joyful noise. The members of our church married and built houses near the large house. And while we prayed earnestly and our church grew, we began to feel that something was missing, and so began another spiritual journey that eventually took us back hundreds of years to the beginning of the Christian Church.

We began our search where the writers of the Bible left off. We read the writings of Bishops and learned about the lives of Saints. We studied the deliberations of Councils. We began to discover that Protestants had lost continuity with the Church that had been since the beginning of Christian time. Neither my Kentucky forefathers nor my ancestors in the English Church had lost it; they were simply the inheritors of something that had happened hundreds of years before, when the

(Continued on page 5)

continued from page 4

Church of the West slowly drifted from the early Church and even marched armies against Christians in the East. And the would-be reformers who came later discarded many good things along with some excesses and errors.

During this period of searching, I read *The Orthodox Church* by Timothy Ware. Here, I believed, was what we were looking for, an answer that made sense and promised to satisfy our longings. We made our way back to our Russian neighbors for a service, but were not prepared for the walls of icons, brass stands of flickering candles, the priest's vestments, swinging censers and prayers chanted in a strange language. The cultural divide seemed impossible to bridge.

But we did not give up. We continued to study and to change, edging closer to see that this Orthodox Church – whether Russian or Greek or Middle Eastern – did in fact present the unbroken continuity with the early Church that we had been seeking. We only needed to see through the customs and practices that were strange to us because they grew from an eastern, rather than western culture. We finally realized

But we did not give up. We continued to study and to change, edging closer to see that this Orthodox Church – whether Russian or Greek or Middle Eastern – did in fact present the unbroken continuity with the early Church that we had been seeking.

that we needed to become part of this Orthodox Church and we began to knock on doors, seeking acceptance. The door that opened to us was that of the ancient Patriarchate of Antioch, and one spring day its Archbishop entered our church in



Metropolitan Philip welcoming the members of St. John's community into the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America on April 1, 1987

Eagle River, proclaiming to a tearful congregation, **“Welcome Home!”**

Our spiritual return from an ancestral separation from the early Church was neither a superficial conversion nor a total renunciation of our past. It was simply a homecoming. It was the prodigal son entering his old home to be joyfully reunited with his family. Did he track in a little mud as he came? Sure. Did he seem a bit awkward for a while? Sure. But he's home now and ready to help with chores. It seems there's a lot of work to do.

That is my story and, by extension, the story of our parish in Eagle River. We are grateful to God for bringing us together and look forward eagerly to discover what He has in store for us in the future. To Him be glory forever.

*Fr. Marc Dunaway is the pastor of St. John Orthodox Cathedral, Eagle River, Alaska. This essay, in slightly altered form, was first published in *Again* magazine.*

Community Books, continued from page 3

The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency

Alexander McCall Smith; Anchor Books, a division of Random House, NY; 2004

A Review by Maye Johnson

This is the first in a series of five delightful and heartwarming books that may be enjoyed by readers of all ages. The author's sense of humor and creativity are evident as we read of Precious Ramotswe who starts her own detective agency in Gaborone, Botswana. The author, who grew up in South Africa, portrays a land of otherworldly beauty in this region bordered by the Kalahari Desert. He emphasizes tradition, morality, honesty, hard work and an understanding of the value of life in community. *“That was all common knowledge, part of the web of memories that made up village life in Botswana. In that world, nobody needed to be a stranger, for visitors came for a reason, did they not? They would be associated, then, with the people whom they were visiting. There was a place for everybody.”* This quote appears in Book #5, *The Full Cupboard of Life*, my favorite of the series. I hope that Mr. Smith will soon write #6 and allow us to travel back to Botswana and walk through the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency again.

PORT ARTHUR ICON continued from page 1

agreement with China. This served the interests of both countries, which were at the time concerned about the rise of

He went on to explain that Christianity had not disappeared in Russia, only that Christianity in Russia had been 70 years in Babylonian exile.

Japanese power and influence. The icon was written in St. Petersburg and was en route to the Russian fortress at Port Arthur when war began. The Russian Navy had already been defeated when the icon reached Vladivostok so the decision was made to take it overland through Manchuria. By then the army was in a disorderly retreat from Port Arthur and the icon was lost.

Some 95 years later, quite miraculously, Russian pilgrims in Jerusalem rediscovered and purchased the icon in an Arab antique shop. The return of the icon to Vladivostok symbolized the reawakening of the Christian faith and the renewing of the blessings of Christ to a country long suffering under the communist yoke.

But the story of the icon does not end there. Fr. Roman and others dreamed of seeing the icon finish the

journey it began so long ago, and in May 2004, 100 years after the war with Japan, the icon was put aboard the Russian sailing ship *Pallada*, the start of a unique pilgrimage. The *Pallada*, with Fr. Roman and his entourage on board, sailed out of Golden Horn Bay, around the Korean Peninsula, and on to Port Arthur.

Port Arthur today is a major Chinese naval base. When the *Pallada* arrived, the Chinese authorities informed the Russians that the icon could not be taken to the cemetery containing the graves of Russian soldiers who perished in the Russian-Japanese War. However the group was allowed to tour the cemetery. Their Chinese guide, after looking cautiously in all directions, did allow a small Orthodox prayer service. On the second day the Chinese authorities permitted the icon to be brought to the main entrance, where a ceremony was conducted under the watchful eye of the Chinese police. One hundred years after its intended arrival, the icon brought blessing and comfort to the Russian soldiers and to Port Arthur.

During their visit to Vladivostok last January, Dan Kendall and Gale Armstrong learned from Bishop Benjamin that the return of the precious icon of the Lady of Port Arthur symbolized the freeing of the Christian church in Russia. Christianity, he said, had not disappeared in Russia, but had been 70 years in Babylonian captivity. Dan and Gale brought back to St. John's a hand painted copy of the icon, a gift from Fr. Roman, which now hangs in the Cathedral in Eagle River.

Fr. Roman, accompanied by his parishioner and interpreter, Olga Prikhodko, visited St. John's Cathedral again in October of this year. Fr. Roman told his remarkable story and spoke of his new

dream – to bring the icon, once more on board the *Pallada* - to Alaska. Fr. Roman's prayer is that the Triumph of Our Lady of Port Arthur icon – miraculously rediscovered after so many years - will help to unite the Orthodox Christians of the Russian Far East with those in Alaska and the United States, and that it will spread the Orthodox faith in every land it touches.



Russian Cemetery in Port Arthur, China

ST HERMAN:

continued from back page

John's are neither "Russian" nor "Native" Orthodox, St. Herman is our spiritual father. We Americans, whose culture encourages us to pursue the goals of power, possessions and pleasure, are particularly fortunate to remember him so near to Christmas, that day of consumption and excess.

By some standards, Saint Herman, like Jesus Christ himself, was a miserable failure. He lived and died in obscurity, among humble people. He left behind no material wealth, no great books, no portraits or statues of his physical likeness. But, even as the modern day power brokers and oil barons and commercial kings streak through the Alaskan sky, only to flame out like spent meteors, the name of Saint Herman of Alaska, *the joyful North Star of the Church of Christ*, will be forever known and remembered throughout the whole world.



Father Roman, Dan Kendall, Bishop Benjamin, Olga Prikhodko, Gale Armstrong in Vladivostok in January

EVERYONE'S HOME

by *Maye Lourie Johnson*

I graduated from John Brown University in 1971, an interdenominational stronghold, and my head was spinning from every doctrinal whim presented by its professors and guest lecturers. In the spring of '73, my brother Demus Lourie returned from Alaska to our childhood home in Vermont and told me about a group of people who loved God, grace and forgiveness and lived together with a couple named Harold and Barb Dunaway. I knew I had to visit this place, so I flew to Anchorage the end of June and by the middle of July, I decided to make Alaska my home.

Upon arriving, I was taken to a large house (affectionately called the "Big

but no one ever went away hungry. During that first summer, I cooked and cleaned, hiked and explored the trails around Eagle River, and got to know the people in the Big House.

The study program began in September and one of my first friends in Alaska, Robin, became my new roommate. The

Young people finish this program with a better sense of where they fit in the church body, and a better ability to serve their own church and community.

program included Harold's teaching of the

House") in the small suburb of Eagle River, north of Anchorage. Although I was to learn that young people moved in and out of this house as regularly as the tide, I met a core group of people that summer who remain an important part of my life. We all were given chores and mine, with Barb's wonderful guidance, was to feed these people. Many nights we had no idea who would sit down at the table for dinner,

book of Hebrews, the reading of spiritual and inspiring books, working out the kinks of living with other people, chores, constant hospitality, serving meals, and Saturday night meetings where I too heard the healing message of grace and forgiveness. I not only acquired a like-minded group of friends; I was fortunate also to spend my life with one of them. In a simple service in the Big House living room, Tom Johnson and I were married in May 1974. We attended many more weddings in that room, which eventually grew too small to hold us. During summer months, weddings were often held on the front lawn, the faraway, snowy peaks of Mt. McKinley serving as a backdrop.

Twenty-two years after Tom and I finished our year in the Big House, our eldest daughter, Anna, took her turn, meeting her own future husband in the same setting. Our daughter Rebekah shared a Big House bedroom with Katie Armstrong, the daughter of my old roommate, Robin. Rebekah, too, met her future husband at the Big House. (No, it is not a "matchmaking" house; when young singles live under the



Saint James House

same roof, seeking God's will and a place in the church and community, the natural result is sometimes the joyous sacrament of marriage.) To complete the circle, our son Peter also decided to take the opportunity to experience living away from home while still enjoying the benefit of structure, guidance, and, of course, regular meals!

The Big House we love so much is now, officially, the "St. James House," and it attracts young people from our own community and from across the states to its yearly, nine-month program of study and discipleship. It is a great way for kids to leave home while the folks know they are in a safe, caring place. The married couples who run the program have tons of energy (when they begin!), are dedicated to the young residents of the House, and are guided by the wise hands of St. John's priests. Young people finish this program with a better sense of where they fit in the church body, and a better ability to serve their own church and community.

Moving into the Big House thirty-one years ago was truly a gift and a blessing from God, one that brought my husband and dear friends into my life. Our crazy little '70's group with our long hair, bushy beards and bell bottoms, sitting on bean bags while we bellowed out Jesus songs, did find the "true faith" that we sought and many of us are still in this community, members of St. John Orthodox Cathedral. I am also blessed to see my grandchildren enjoying the special events and hospitality at the St. James House. May God continue His blessing upon it.



Maye & Tom Johnson with Anna in 1977

Saint John Orthodox Cathedral
P.O. Box 771108
Eagle River, Alaska 99577
Web site; <http://www.stjohnalaska.org/>



SAINT HERMAN: A GIFT FOR AMERICA

By Mary Alice Cook

The list of internationally famous Alaskans is a short one. The land itself is, of course, known everywhere. But the land has claimed few individuals who are instantly recognized all over the world. On this elite list is a man, a Russian immigrant to Alaska, who owned no property, who made no money, and who wielded no power in the affairs of state. He spent much of his life in conflict with political leaders, an advocate for a people who had no clout with the government which ruled over them. As a teenager in Moscow, he had chosen the ascetic life of a monk. His name was Herman.

Two hundred years ago, while pioneer immigrants were still hacking a civilization out of the American wilderness, a small party of Christian missionaries landed at Kodiak. They were sent by the Church in Russia and charged with evangelizing the native people of Alaska. Among them was the monk Herman who appeared - at least on the surface - to possess few qualifications for such a task. He had little formal education and no particular skills, humanly speaking, which would mark him as a man of talent and promise. The only traits he had to recommend him were his goodness, his faith, and his practice of continuous prayer.

These, it turned out, were all he needed. He became, in his own words, the humble servant and nurse of the native people of Alaska, their teacher, spiritual father, and defender. Tirelessly, he labored on behalf of his beloved Aleuts, defending them against the cruelty of the Russian traders, pleading their cause before the rulers of Russia, caring for their orphaned children, and suffering persecution by his own people because of all these actions.

He made his home on a thickly forested island about a mile and a quarter off the mainland. Spruce Island it was called, lush and beautiful, but spartan. A tiny hut, a wooden chapel, and a small house which served as both school and guest house were the only structures on the island. This was Father Herman's home for more than forty years and where, on December 13, 1837, he

died. It is because of Father Herman and other Orthodox missionaries that Alaska today is studded with those quaintly picturesque, domed churches. These buildings are more than a charming subject for a tourist brochure. They - and the people who worship in them - are the living legacy of Father Herman.

Today, the simple monk Herman is revered by millions as Saint Herman of Alaska. August 9 and December 13 are celebrated in his memory all over the world. Although, as we mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter, we at St.



(Continued on page 6)