

Tundra Times

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Week of October 15, 1992

Anchorage, Alaska

Atomic arrogance:

Fear, anger run deep in Point Hope

By Karl Francis and
Jeffrey R. Richardson

About 100 angry, fearful residents crammed into Pt. Hope city hall Oct. 9 demanding cleanup of a nearby nuclear waste site.

The federal official in charge of assessing

the danger of radiation from the abandoned site made a hasty visit to the village to hear local concerns and answer questions. Thomas Gerusky, a health physicist for the U.S. Dept. of Energy, led a team of federal and state officials who arrived in the northern town about noon for a 2 p.m. meeting. The party departed shortly after 3 p.m.

The trip was to have included a visit to the Cape Thompson site about 26 miles south of Point Hope but bad weather forced cancellation of this plan, according to Chuck Kleeschulte, of Sen. Frank Murkowski's office.

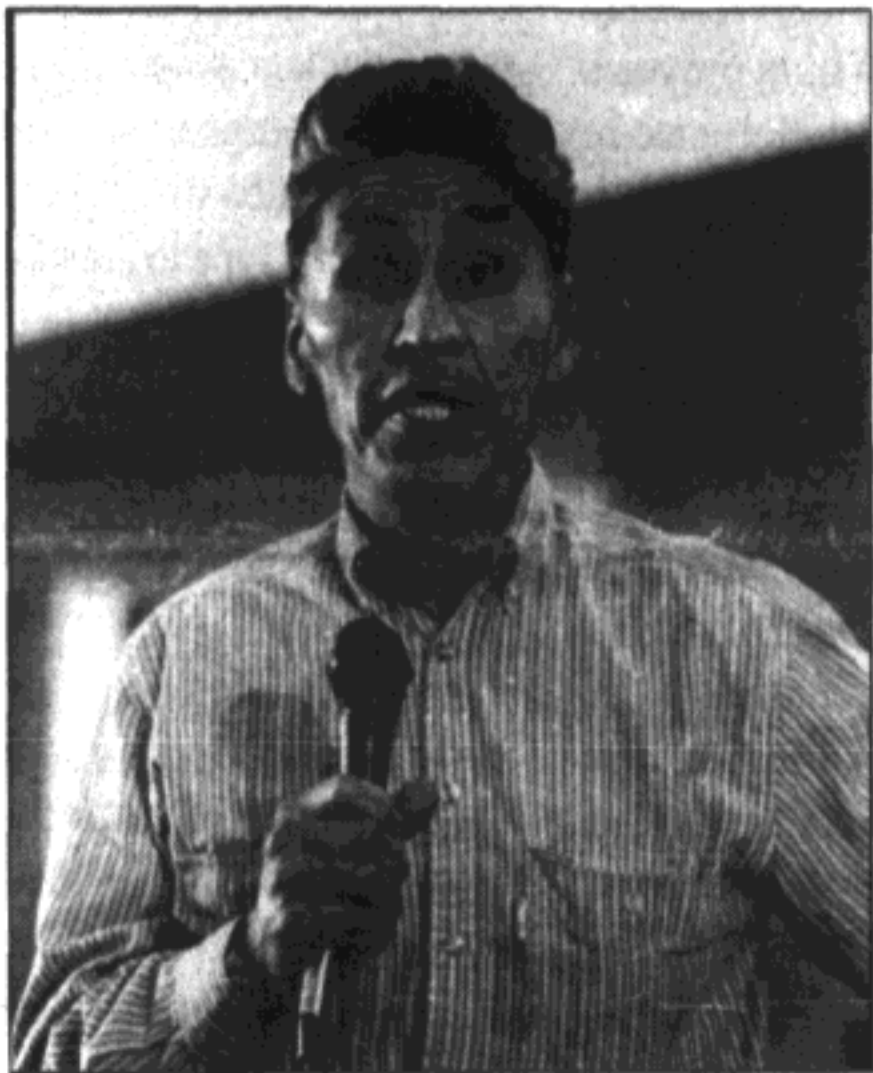
Feelings are high and nerves remain taut following Gerusky's trip. Residents feel they were never told the truth about nuclear experiments conducted by the U.S. government in the area during the fifties and sixties.

One such effort, Project Chariot, involved a planned nuclear blast at Cape Thompson to assess the potential for non-military nuclear applications. Plans for the blast were later scrapped, but related experiments may have been moved forward.

Concerns that high local cancer rates are linked to radioactivity were heightened this year when nuclear contamination from testing, accidents and sloppy disposal of waste in the Arctic by the former Soviet Union became known.

The existence of Cape Thompson radioactive materials was confirmed following accidental discovery by University of Alaska/Fairbanks researchers. Gerusky's job is to determine what risks are posed by the site and submit a cleanup plan to his boss, Energy Secretary James Watkins.

See: *Atomic arrogance*, page 16



Wilfred Lane, Sr. (l of Kotzebue) addresses the meeting in Point Hope, Oct. 9, 1992. Lane owns a Cape Thompson allotment.



(Photos by Jim Magdanz)

Department of Energy health physicist Tom Gerusky listens to residents' concerns in Point Hope. His task is to come up with a cleanup plan.

The threat of radiation: Where will the next shoe drop?

By Jeffrey R. Richardson
Throughout rural Alaska, people are now asking the same nuclear

questions people in Point Hope have been asking for years: What else aren't they telling us?

While a federal team headed to Cape Thompson to probe the cleanup prospects for an abandoned radioactive stash, the U.S. Air Force was flying representatives from the Alaska Federation of Natives and four Athabascan villages to inspect a military surveillance site powered by small nuclear generators. The generators were briefly threatened by a wildfire recently, raising concerns about radiation releases there. The USAF, insists the generators are safe, is to schedule public meetings in Fort Yukon, Arctic Village, Venetie and Birch Creek.

The revelations about Point Hope and Burnt

Mountain have made many Alaskans extremely skeptical about the intentions and integrity of government agencies with respect to radiation issues.

"This is chewing up so much of our time, it's unbelievable," says Carl Hild, executive director of the Alaska Health Project (AHP), a non-profit organization providing advocacy and technical assistance on occupational

and environmental health issues. He's been getting calls from people worried about the presence and effects of radiation in their areas.

"We have received numerous calls. I would say we're receiving two phone calls a day for more than three weeks, says Hild.

Hild is familiar with the long-standing worries in Point Hope regarding impacts from nuclear experi-

See: *Burnt mountain*, page 15

Message from the Chairman...

By Thomas Richards Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Eskimo, Indian, Aleut Publishing Company

Hearing the news about the apparent demise of the *Tundra Times* last Dec. put me into a state of shock. I felt a deep sense of loss. The newspaper had been an important part of my life for a number of years. I began as a sales representative in 1968. When I left in 1980, I had completed a four-year stint as editor and publisher.

It was as if a part of me had died. The first thing I did was to hop on my snow machine and spend a couple of days chasing ptarmigan across the tundra. Then, I called the *Tundra Times* Chairman to express my condolences and to convey my understanding of how difficult a decision had been made.

There was still hope that the newspaper would be sold and reorganized and would resurface in some

(See: *Message*, page 2)

See you at the
Tundra Times/AFN
Banquet!