

# Doyon does show for shareholders

**George Attla  
biography will  
star Chief Dan  
George and Slim  
Pickens**

Pert Fairbanks waitress Patty Rhodes was nonchalantly driving her 1947 Chevy Fleetmaster sedan down a busy street one day in the Interior City when a slender man with blonde hair and glasses caught her eye. The gentleman was waving his arms dramatically and gesturing towards our heroine in a most conspicuous fashion. Not one to let curiosity go unsatisfied, she pulled over to see what the man wanted. He wanted her car, to make a movie he said, and her car could help him recreate Fairbanks as it was in 1958. Unable to resist such an offer, Patty Rhodes agreed. That's how the story goes.

It is actually only a small episode in a much larger story that begins with world champion dog musher George Attla (originally from Huslia), whose battle to win dogsled races despite a leg ruined by tuberculosis, is the subject of a full length feature movie now being filmed in Alaska by Raven Pictures of Juneau. With financial and moral backing from Doyon, Ltd., the movie is being produced on a scale large enough to attract the likes of Chief Dan George, Slim Pickens and Geore Clutesi.

Doyon President Tim Wallis explains his company's interest in the Attla film:

"The board felt the movie was a unique opportunity to make a good financial investment for our shareholders and at the same time invest in a project that shareholders could identify with. The story of one shareholder's life, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE SIX



Pius Savage, of Holy Cross, greets his lead dog on location in Ely, Minnesota. Savage and crew were filming "Catch the Wind", the biography of world champion dog musher George Attla, the "Huslia Hustler."

By Rebecca Raney

# ● Doyon movie on famous dog-mushing shareholder

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George Attla's, is very close to their own lives in the village."

Two makers of documentary films, Ralph Liddle and John Logue, wrote the movie script, based upon interviews with Attla made at his Yukon River fish camp. The movie is called "Catch the Wind."

When the Tundra Times first spoke with Liddle and Logue, they had just returned to Fairbanks from Ely, Minnesota, where Attla was competing in the All-American Dogsled competition:

"We were doing a recreation of the 1958 Anchorage Fur Rendezvous. We had to have crowds and a finish down the middle of the streets and Ely is a Fiftyish looking town. But we got sort of in the middle of a blizzard, which was a problem," Liddle explains.

It was Liddle who commandeered the Chevy.

Liddle says he has always been intrigued with the Attla story, and after approaching the veteran musher and doing some initial research, Liddle and Logue made a formal presentation to the Doyon Board in hopes the regional Native corporation for Interior Alaska, largest of the 12 created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, would invest in the picture. By February of 1977, the two firms had reached an agreement, a limited partnership called Raven Pictures, to produce the film. According to Liddle:

"I had always thought it would be a lot better if it were financed by an Indian source of money. I think that what really interested Doyon was that American Indian children grow up without Indian heroes. They expect to make money on the movie, but I think their interest was in doing something

that was culturally reinforcing."

Liddle and Logue spent several months last year scouting and auditioning up and down the Yukon River towns and throughout Alaska for actors. Although most of the parts have been cast, Raven Pictures is still looking for someone to play George as a young boy. At least two veteran dog mushers have roles in the picture. Leonard Kristka of Koyukuk will play the part of a friend of George's, and one of his dog handlers. Musher Merv Hilpipe will play the part of Gareth Wright, a long-time racer who still runs the circuit every year.

The part of George Attla in his Twenties is being played by Pius Savage of Holy Cross, who told us with a laugh that until filming the sequence, he had not mushed in 12 years. An advertisement for actors caught Savage's eye:

"My wife just kept talking to me, told me to try it. I said I'd never get it. And she kept talking and talking to me. So I sent in a photograph and resume. Then I forgot about it."

When Raven Pictures sent him a postcard, asking that he get in touch with them, Savage tried unsuccessfully to make the call but could not get through. He forgot about the picture again.

When Savage and the Raven crew finally met, Savage had a chance to read the script:

"First thing that came to my mind, I said I could do it!"

And so, after years away from his village going to school, bussing tables, working in a print shop and as a roustabout and two years in the army, Pius Savage has come home in a unique sort of way, re-discovering his heritage through a very real, very sensitive script.

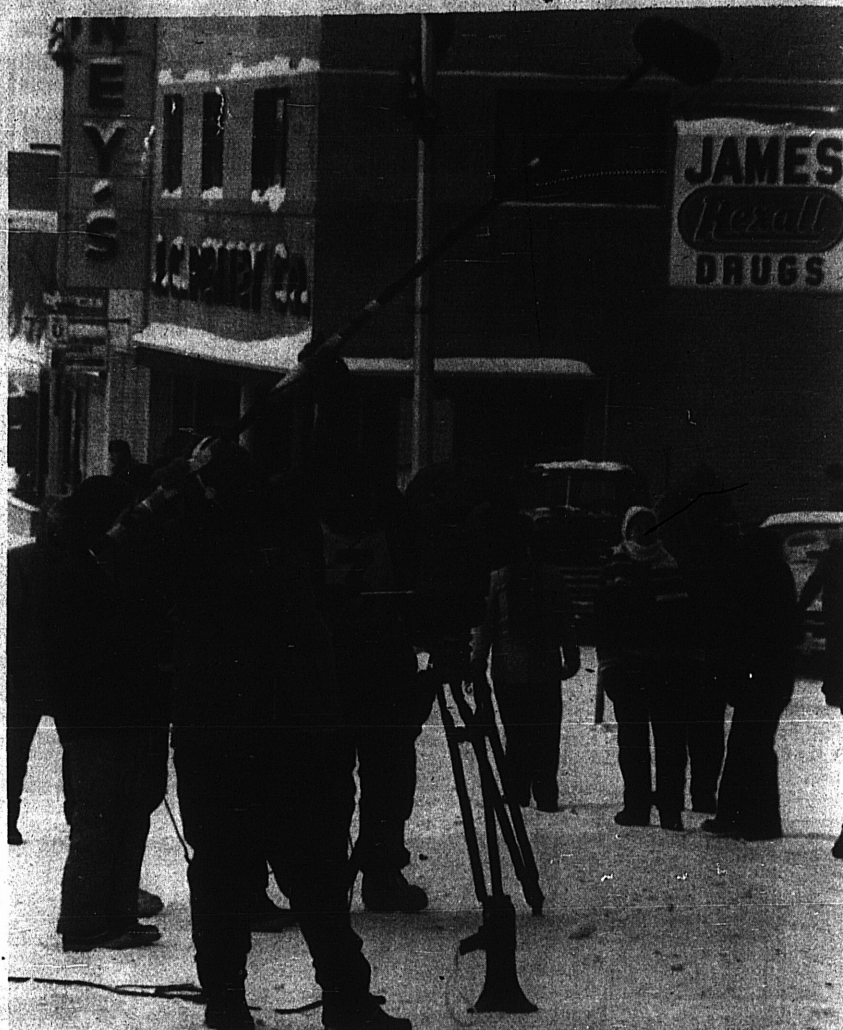
Savage says filming the movie has broken down many inhibitions he once felt and has given him a new perspective on what hard work can mean:

"I never get physically

do a scene with him. He's my hero (with a smile). Now, I'll give him a cup of coffee, piece of dry fish."

George plays the part of a friend of the Attla family who trades young Attla his

actors to make sure that they would be dressed the same way when the start of the race was filmed in Fairbanks. The filmmakers must now block off several Fairbanks streets,



With the \$37,000 camera bundled against the Ely, Minnesota, cold, the soundman with the microphone readies for the filming of the recreation of the 1958 Fur Rendezvous race. Photo by Rebecca Raney.

tired, I get mentally tired, trying to live the part with all the emotion," Savage explains.

And he is admittedly excited about playing a part with Chief Dan George: "I saw him in Little Big Man and I never thought I'd

first lead dog. Slim Pickens plays the part of a Huslia storekeeper, while the part of Attla's father is played by award-winning Canadian Indian actor George Clutesi.

The intricacies of shooting a feature motion picture are well-illustrated in the shooting that has been done so far. Here is a synopsis of what has happened:

The 1958 Fur Rendezvous race was the first of several world championships Attla would win over the years. Since the race could begin at one point and finish at another, Raven decided to film the finish of the race in Ely, since crowds would already be on hand for the 1978 All-American. When the sequence was filmed, snapshots were taken of the

borrow a few old cars and set the scene for the race. While all this is going on, the Raven crew is searching for good sites to shoot the village scenes, looking for props and costumes to fit the period scenes and getting ready to film the real George Attla in action at this year's Fur Rendezvous in Anchorage.

"Catch the Wind" is scheduled for release by next Christmas, after a long year of filming. But the crew is enthusiastic and Doyon officials express strong approval of a script that so sharply and clearly tells not only the story of one Athabaskan man, but many other Native people throughout Alaska.

Raven Pictures has contacted Doyon regarding the need of articles of clothing, household goods, and other items related to Athabaskan Native village life in the 1930's through 1950's. These properties will be used in the feature-length motion picture, "Catch The Wind," being filmed in Alaska this Winter and Spring by Raven in cooperation with Doyon, Limited.

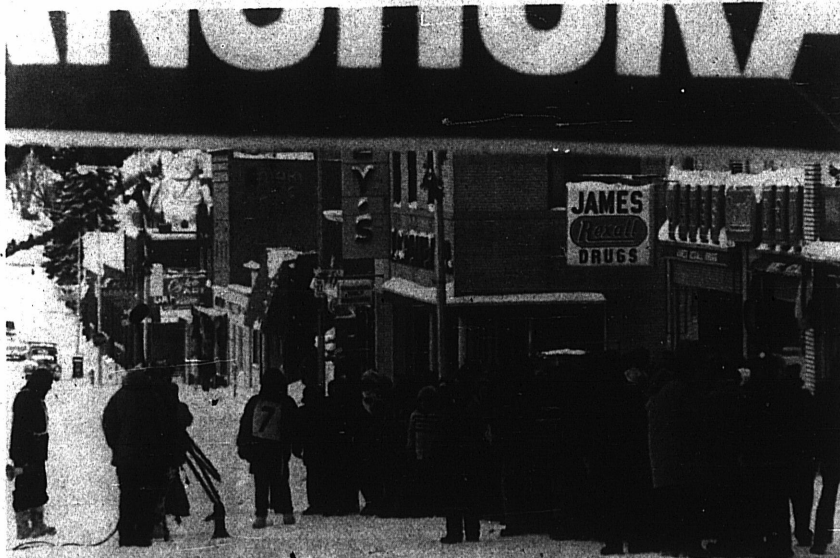
Following is a list of items needed:

Older and used clothing (particularly fur, leather, wool and beadwork goods);

Household, trapping and mushing paraphernalia which would have been used in the 1930's through 1950's.

Raven Pictures would like to borrow, rent, or buy any of the above. All borrowed properties are guaranteed to be returned in the original condition offered.

Please contact Raven Pictures, c/o Doyon, Limited, First & Hall Streets, Fairbanks, AK 99701, or call 456-4631.



Getting ready to shoot a crowd scene in Ely, "Extras," people hired to be part of the crowd, await instructions from the man with the bullhorn at far left. Note the Anchorage banner in the upper foreground. Photo by Rebecca Raney.