

Mount Edgecumbe reunion set in Sitka Feb. 20 to 22

By Bill Hess

Tundra Times Staff

Old friends, historic basketball teams, once renowned choirs, past frustrations and glories will be vividly remembered next month as hundreds of Mount Edgecumbe Alumni gather on the islands off Sitka for a reunion.

The reunion, the first of its kind since Mt. Edgecumbe began operating as a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school in 1947, comes as the institution faces termination.

Under budget cuts put into effect by the Reagan adminis-

tration, the school had been scheduled for closure this June, but hard lobbying by Native leaders coupled with the efforts of U.S. Sen. Frank Murkowski and a letter from Gov. Jay Hammond have apparently bought another year of grace for the school.

Ed Mercer, a member of the reunion committee, notes that while there will be much recreation and entertainment at the reunion, it will have its serious side. "We will be calling a meeting to order," he explains, "to pay tribute to Mount Edgecumbe High

School, and to seek a resolution to keep it open. We are looking at the class reunion as a secondary thing. The Point Barrow people in particular wanted to have a meaningful program if they were to come all the way down."

Registration will begin at 1 p.m. on Feb. 20 and 21 in the auditorium with reunion events taking place. Mercer says that transportation will be provided from the airport to places of lodging, whether at hotels or with friends, and also to the school. There will be some accommodations available at the school and at private residences of community people who have agreed to put guests up.

Among proposed reunion highlights will be a series of basketball games. Interested alumni will be asked to sign up for both men's and women's teams. At least one game will be played against the current staff of Mt. Edgecumbe. "We're also requesting that past cheerleaders sign up, to encourage their teams."

Mercer says.

"An alumni song queen will be chosen. We hope we can get past alumni choir members together, as well as the alumni band," he adds. "We will find out just how rusty these people are!"

B.J. McGillis, who coached Mount Edgecumbe basketball players to the regional championship in 1959, is expected, as is Michael Afforgin, who directed the choir during the fifties. There should be an alumni dance on Feb. 22, which is also Founders Day, Mt. Edgecumbe's 35th anniversary.

Donations of traditional Native foods are being sought for the banquet. Different organizations throughout the state are being asked to contribute to the event, and to advertise in the program booklets. There will be booths for arts and crafts.

Mount Edgecumbe Supt. Leroy Demmert will address the group, as will Eleanor Weedman, a student. While other speaking arrangements have not yet been finalized,

it is hoped Murkowski will address the gathering.

Interested alumni should get in touch with their contact personnel. They are: Point Barrow-Able Akpick, 852-4578; Fairbanks-Gerald Evans, 452-5568; Charlie Moses, 479-4041, Mary Jane Fate, Melvin Charlie and George Bennett; Anchorage-Elaine Etuokeok, 279-7709; Helen Reed, 272-2728; and Ruth Williard, 265-0418; Nome-George Walters, 443-2284; Eagle River-John Waller, Box 137, Geneva Street, 99577; Hydaburg-Raleigh Morrison, 285-3292; Klawock-Donald Marvin, 755-2223; Kake-Russell James, Sr., 785-3751; Angoon-Reginald Nelson, Sr., 788-3535; Klukwan-Johanna Hotch, 766 - 2559; Yakutat-Lowell Peterson, 784-3236; Hoonah-Marie Howard, 945-3306, and Lorretta Williams; Metlakatla-Mae Marfden, 886-7882; Sitka-Frank O. Williams, 966-2643; Vesta Dminicks, 747-8777, and Ed Mercer, 966-3007.

Caril Moses Martin is chairman of the committee.