

Sealaska president addresses Anchorage Chamber of Commerce

by Jim Benedetto

Tundra Times Editor

Byron I. Mallott, President of Sealaska, addressed the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce at the Egan Center on July 15. The topic of Mr. Mallott's talk was "1991: the Real Issue."

Saying that, "1991 is all about how Alaska's Native people wish to live their future," Mallott charmed the receptive crowd with a down-to-earth, yet richly metaphoric analysis of 1991 issues and their effect on the future of Alaska.

for long: "The essence of the ANCSA/1991 issue is the compelling desire of Alaska's Native people to survive as ethnically identifiable segments of Alaskan society, able to pursue their life ways, maintain their heritage, values and philosophies, their languages, and evolve their cultures in ways that offer their distinctiveness to the building of a richer, more unique 'overall Alaskan society.'"

ANCSA, Mallott maintained, was envisioned by Native peoples as a way to ensure their future through protecting the land, as

comment on the impeachment proceedings against Governor Bill Sheffield. Mallott quoted a Knight-Ridder columnist from Seattle as saying, "What you're impeaching your governor for, we call 'leadership' in New York."

Mallott skillfully fielded questions from the crowd on the possibility of Native corporation mergers, stock alienation, and the

Berger report, after his prepared remarks.

The Anchorage Chamber of Commerce also honored John Vallentine, KIMO's veteran news anchorman, who was introduced as the man "invited into more Alaskan homes each day than any other person." Vallentine is leaving Alaska to take a position in Milwaukee, Wisconsin—one of America's top ten television news

markets.

Larry Baker, the first speaker at the Chamber luncheon, delivered a series of tongue-in-cheek remarks on downtown Anchorage's prostitution problem. Baker said that local government should stay away from the problem, and that it should be handled by the private sector. Baker observed that, "without customers, there is no business."

"1991 is about the future of Alaska"

"Alaska's future is not about economic tides and mortar and brick—it is about Alaska's people and how they live together," said Mallott.

In an open acknowledgement of the need for cooperation from the private sector on the 1991 agenda, Mallott praised the business community and compared the Chamber to Superman. "You may not be able to leap tall buildings with a single bound, but you build the tall buildings to leap," Mallott explained over the laughter of the more than 200 Chamber members in attendance at the Monday luncheon.

Yet Mallott did not diverge from the main point of his speech

well as allowing oil development to proceed.

In case anyone missed the point he made previously, Mallott spelled out in economic terms the necessity of preserving the cultural heritage of Alaska's Native people, citing Alaska's \$1.5 billion tourism industry. "Alaska's scenic beauty and heart-stopping isolated splendor is but the backdrop against which Alaska's people reveal their richness of culture, heritage and lifestyles," Mallott continued.

Among other things in Mallott's speech was a call for an ethical code for Alaska's public officials, although he diffused the issue with laughter when asked to



Byron Mallot addresses the ACOC in the Egan Center.

photo by Jim Benedetto