

# *Legendary Friend of Villages—* **What Is the Fate Of North Star III?**

By JACQUELINE GLASGOW  
Staff Writer

The North Star III is a legend. But it is not dead history — yet. It is an ongoing and vitally alive part of Alaska coastal village life.

Following a tradition and a course set out by the historic ship, the "Boxer," the North Star III has been in service 27 years. Its arrival with Captain "Moe" Cole and his crew are awaited with eagerness each year by the villages they serve.

The residents of those villages fear that the much loved vessel will not serve them much longer. It has been predicted that its remaining life expectancy is five to seven years. After that, no one knows what the fate of the North Star is to be.

ANICA, Inc., Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association, has urged the State of Alaska to reinstate a policy of shipping needed goods and supplies from state agencies through the North Star, which has been steadily losing revenue to other carriers.

"The North Star has for many years shown a dedication to delivery, a concern for village people, and demonstrated their ability to deliver our Native Store merchandise at the most reasonable price and in the best condition," states ANICA, Inc.

"It has done this on a self-supporting, revenue producing basis, and is not supported by tax dollars."

The Board of ANICA, Inc. are concerned that schools formerly operated by the BIA and now under the State Operated School system are not utilizing the North Star as in the past. Previously, all dry cargo for the schools was shipped by the vessel.

"The subsequent loss of revenue," states ANICA, "only serves to hasten the day when all villages along the coast will lose the exceptional services of this fine ship."

"The Board understands that the state of Alaska has a 'Ship Alaska' policy. Policies, however, do not always serve those people affected. Usually policies serve those who have the organizational muscle to express their interests to legislative bodies, in this case, Alaskan barge carriers."

The ANICA Board urged the State to review its shipping policies "with an eye to reinstating shipping on the North Star for as long as that vessel continues to exclusively serve Alaska's coastal Native villages."

"It is only a matter of time," they observed, "until the services of the North Star, along with the friendship demonstrated by the North Star Captains and crew, will be gone forever."

"Based on our experience, higher rates and less service will no doubt prevail at that time, making it even more expensive to live in village Alaska."

The future of commercial barge delivery, parcel post, and air freight seem assured in Alaska. But what of the historic tradition of the North Star? Is the day of ships to become like so much else in Alaska, a thing of the past, fondly remembered?