

RAHI graduates 35 rural students

FAIRBANKS — Kathryn Milligan-Monroe stood before 35 fellow graduates of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Rural Alaska Honors Institute. In a voice quivering with emotion, the Kotzebue high school student told her classmates what she was thinking about after six of the most challenging weeks in her life.

"There are times I didn't think I would make it through the morning, let alone the whole six weeks," Milligan-Monroe said. "I learned to write a research paper. I learned how to study for a test. But the thing I learned the most is how important my friends are."

RAHI is designed to prepare students from rural Alaska for college and for future leadership in the Native community.

Morris Thompson, president of Doyon Ltd. and a University of Alaska regent, stressed to the students the importance of pursuing their education.

"Education opens more doors to better opportunities, which leads to better careers," Thompson said. "The more education you seek, the more jobs will seek you out."

Approximately 290 students have participated in RAHI since the program was founded in 1983. In addition to the students who have graduated from college, about 100 are still in university programs, with about 80 enrolled throughout the University of Alaska system.

RAHI students are generally from Alaska's rural communities and between their junior and senior years of high school.

This year, however, there were four high school seniors and three students from Greenland.

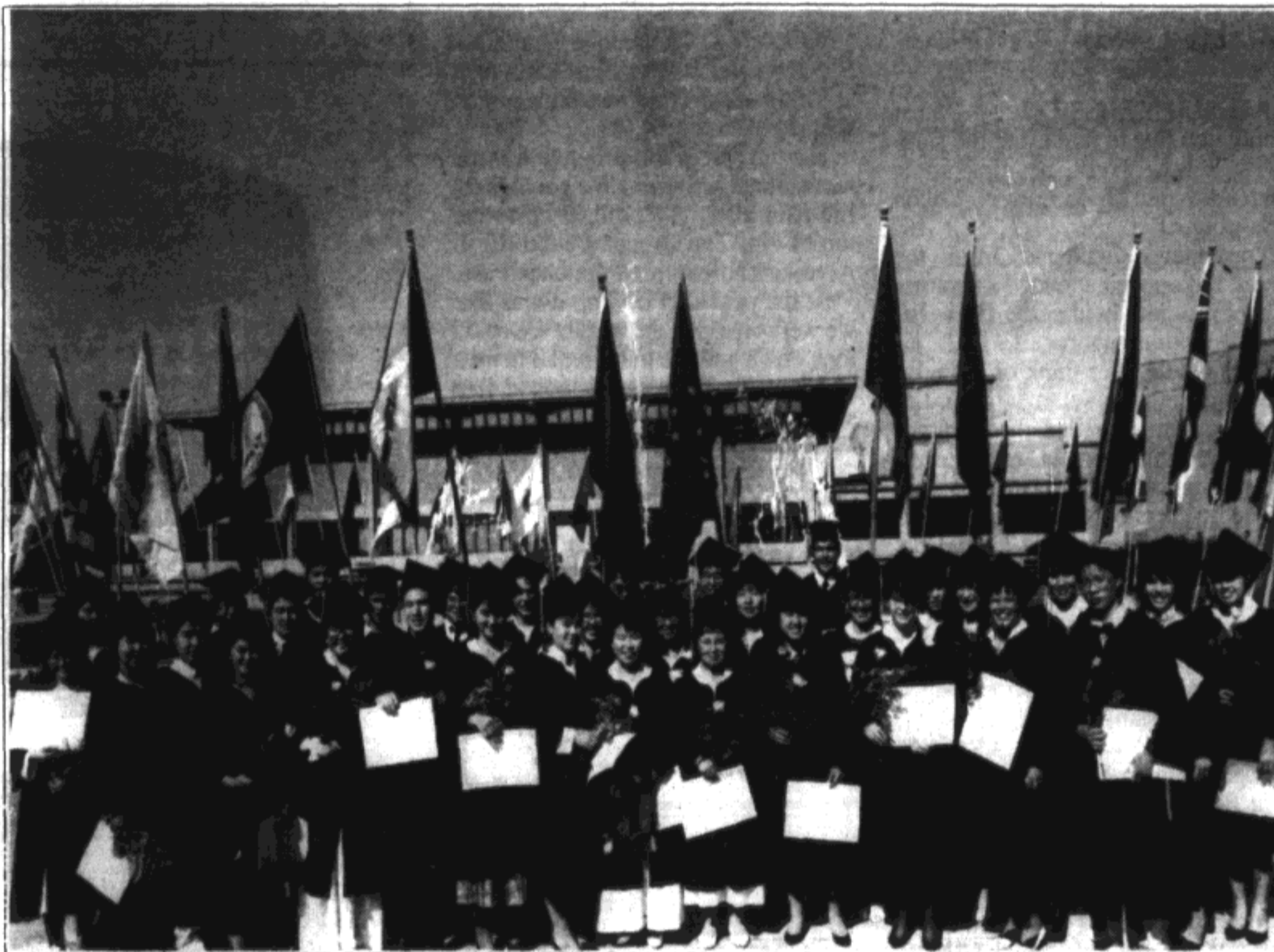
The international trend is expected to continue, with faculty, staff and students already on the recruiting trail.

Gambell's Kim Antoghame left Fairbanks for Siberia days after the graduation ceremony. She'll try to convince her relatives that RAHI can teach them lessons as well.

"No one from Gambell has been to Provideniya for a long time," Antoghame said. "My grandmother was born and raised there. Last year was the first time people went."

UAF Chancellor Patrick O'Rourke, in his remarks to the RAHI graduates, told them to take a good look at their gowns and mortarboards.

"This is not the last time you'll see



The 1989 University of Alaska Fairbanks Rural Alaska Honors Institute graduating class gathers on the UAF campus.

them. I expect you'll be seeing them at least two more times, when you graduate from high school and when you graduate from college," O'Rourke said.

In closing the ceremony, valedictorian John Henry of Stebbins contended that the RAHI graduation ceremony was not an end, but a beginning.

"I'd like to say that each and every one of you has the potential to succeed in college. All of you have special talents. Search deep within yourself to find out what they are," Henry said.

UAF photo by Wayne Fralich