

Tom Richards, Jr.'s Column--

Lobbyist Disautels Turns Out to Be Someone Else

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THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.

OLONGAPO CITY - A number of people have told me that they received the impression that former AFN president Donald R. Wright and I were never on the best of terms. That was not really the case. It was only a matter of him doing his job as AFN president, and me doing my job as Washington correspondent for the Yundra Times.

I will admit that each of us frequently believed the other should have been going about his business differently. I may have caused him some irritation once in a while. If so, he must have received satisfaction from one incident in November of 1971.

The Senate had just passed its version of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and the AFN, the Alaska congressional delegation, and some other members of Congress were celebrating the event with a party in one of the conference rooms of the Capitol Hill Hotel.

As the party wore on, all the celebrants became more in-

formal. Some were gloriously recounting the successes in the lobbying effort which had resulted in passage of the act in both houses.

Others were content to rub elbows with the distinguished lawmakers at the party. Champagne flowed and refreshments were plentiful.

But Don Wright and I sat in one corner of the room engaged in a heated argument. For us, it was not only a time for celebration of the Senate's action, but also an occasion in which to recall matters which sometimes marred our relationship.

A worried Mary Jane Fate dispatched Barry Jackson several times to mediate our differences. Try as he might, Barry was unable to lessen tensions, and Mary Jane worried on.

After some time, while Don and I sat crosslegged facing each other on the carpet, I turned my head slightly and my eye caught a distinguished looking gentleman standing behind us. I then gave him my full attention.

Mr. Desautels, I told the man, you have executed brilliant strategy in moving the land

claims bill through the Congress. I told him that I knew of his fame as a talented lobbyist. I said that it must be absolutely certain that no one else could have accomplished that extremely difficult task.

Don Wright grew impatient as I lavished praise upon the distinguished gentleman, who seemed to be enjoying the attention.

I told the man how I had been following the legislation closely over its troubled path through the Congress, and noted where his services had been invaluable, and that the people who told us that Claude Desautels was the lobbyist for our bill had been indisputably right.

I glanced at Don and saw that he was flushing. I guessed that he must have been irked that I interrupted our argument. As I continued to praise the gentleman, Don could stand it no longer. Although crimson with anger, he must have been delighted as he burst open and shouted at me.

"You idiot!" yelled Don Wright. "That man isn't Desautels. He's the maitre d'."