

# Kaktovik man gets Canadian honor

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

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Joseph Kaleak of Kaktovik has been awarded the British Commonwealth's highest honor for bravery for his actions in a storm on a 1982 trip between Barter Island and Aklavik in the Canadian Northwest Territories.

Edward I. Knox of Barter Island died on the trip despite extraordinary actions taken by Kaleak that resulted in his being nominated for the Royal Canadian Humane Society Silver medal in 1982 and then for the Standhope Gold Medal in 1982.

The Standhope Gold Medal was presented to Kaleak in his home in Kaktovik last week by representatives of the Canadian government acting on behalf of the Commonwealth.

According to information on the incident, Mr. Kaleak and Knox were travelling from Barter Island to Aklavik with three other men when the two decided to separate from the others to view Herschel Island. They intended to rejoin the party at Shingle Point to finish the trip.

As Mr. Kaleak and Knox were travelling on the ice between the mainland and the island, they were caught in a white-out blizzard. Mr. Kaleak was leading Mr. Knox but the second man became lost in the snow.

The blowing snow soon covered all signs of the trail and Mr. Kaleak searched for two and

one-half days without stopping to rest or eat in his efforts to locate Mr. Knox, who had no food or water or shelter with him.

He located Mr. Knox on the afternoon of the third day 60 to 70 miles from where they had become separated. Knox was too weak to move. Kaleak had by this time become very weak from the ordeal but managed to put up shelter and burn parts of his sled in an attempt to warm Mr. Knox.

During the next 24 hours, Mr. Knox said nothing but at about 2:30 p.m. he uttered his last words and died.

Mr. Kaleak stayed at the camp until the next morning then brought the man to Komakuk Beach Distant Early Warning site about five hours away.

Cpl. Don Pittendreigh of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who submitted Kaleak's name for the award, said he was amazed at Kaleak's ability to stay alive during the white-out.

Pittendreigh, who has won a Canadian Bronze medal for bravery, said the Standhope medal is the highest award for valor given out by the Royal Humane Society of the British Commonwealth. He said only one such medal is awarded each year and people from all five of the Commonwealth countries are

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# Kaleak honored



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considered. The commonwealth includes England, Canada, New Zealand, New Guinea, and Australia.

"It is an extremely high privilege in the British Commonwealth to win this award," said Pittendreigh.

Kaleak said that he knew Knox didn't have any tent to keep him sheltered from the storm during his search but he corrected the written report of the incident by saying he had stopped when the storm became too severe to continue.

He said that when he started searching for Knox he searched in the direction Knox had been travelling when he lost Knox's trail. After several hours he became "lucky," he says, and found his companion. However, it was too late and he had too little fuel for a fire to provide adequate warmth for Knox.

Kaleak said he hadn't expected the Standhope Award because he had received the Canadian award in 1982. He now has two impressive medals and a wall plaque for his honor.