

Gold Medal: Success brings discontent

by Vern Metcalfe

for the Tundra Times

JUNEAU — Having survived the recent turmoil on the tube and in the nation's capitol known as "The Summit," let us get to matters of true import. Like who will gain invitations to the 42nd annual renewal of Alaska's premier sporting event — the Juneau Lions' Club Gold Medal Tourney.

This all came forcibly to mind when your scrivener received a telephone call from one Dennis Gray of the Hoonah ANB hall of fame. Dennis, a point guard in modern terms, was much put out that the Hoonah oldtimers were notified that they would not be invited back.

The Gold Medal is a splendid ex-

ample at present of success breeding discontent. This came about when several years ago the Lions' Club folk determined that two brackets — AA and A — were not enough. The first was for big towns (Hoonah excepted), while the A bracket was for small towns and the villages. The C Bracket, as it came to be known, was for the oldtimers, 35 and over.

All well and good, one would think. This gave the true fandom a chance to witness the heros of yesteryear back in action, returning among others one of the all-time greats, Herb Didrickson of Sitka ANB fame. Some of the fans have not missed a beat, or a tourney, over the years.

The backbone of this extravaganza each March has long been teams from the villages. And the sponsorship has

been from local camps of the ANB and ANS, too. The rivalries so generated are intense indeed. The oldtimers' bracket has caused a monumental headache for the Lions' Club, since "everyone wants into the act."

If you want to pack the Juneau-Douglas high gym for a 10 a.m. game, just schedule two oldtimer teams from, say, Angoon and Hoonah. So far this year I've not only heard from Dennis Gray but also the Hudson brothers, Buddy and Rick, from Metlakatla. The Tsimshians are celebrating the centennial of their migration from British Columbia to Annette Island and figure this would cap off the event.

Which leads into the fact that one of my great friends made over the 41 years of this event recently passed on. That would be Dick Kito of Petersburg

who played in more than a few tourneys, always with that infectious smile. He gave lung cancer the same battle he always displayed on the courts.

He was also a past member of the Sealaska Corp. Board of Directors and the proprietor of one of my favorite watering holes of yesteryear, "Kito's Kave," also "The Petersburg Bar." A member of a truly remarkable family (his cousin is Sam Kito), Dick was a successful businessman in the mid-1960s at a time when it was indeed difficult for an Alaska Native to achieve such status.

He joins Jeff David, Roger Lang and Ivan Gamble. I suspect that the 42nd tourney might be dedicated to Lang, Gamble and Kito, as the 41st was to Jeff David.