



*Ray Woods serves full-time.*

## Guard promotes officer to major

by Barbara Crane

Tundra Times reporter

KOTZEBUE — In a surprise ceremony last month, Ray Woods was promoted to the rank of major in the Alaska Army National Guard.

"I've been looking forward to this for a long time," Woods said after receiving the insignia of his new rank from his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Charles Soxie.

Woods, 34, lived in Shungnak through his grade school years, but moved away from home to get his high school education.

He served in the regular Army for three years, traveling around the United States and Korea, before returning to Alaska and becoming a part-time member of the Alaska Army National Guard.

"The Guard sent me to Officer Candidate School, and I received my commission in 1978," Woods said.

Woods is now the Operations Officer for the Guard's 3rd Battalion, headquartered in Kotzebue.

A full-time Guard member since last August, Woods devotes most of his free time to dog mushing. He has competed in many local races, including the 1989 Kobuk 440.

Woods said it was hard for him to decide to take a full-time Guard position because that meant less time he could spend with his dogs.

"But I decided that was the best way for me to go," he said. "I've got four more years with the Guard until I can retire, so I'm concentrating on saving up my money and building up my benefits so when I do retire, I can be a full-time dog musher."