

Kipnuk Guardsmen: Best of the best

by Barbara Crane
Tundra Times reporter

NOME — Five men from Kipnuk have earned the right to call themselves the best of the best.

The five — Staff Sgt. Chris Alexie, Sgt. Harberg Paul, Spec. Carl Amik, Spec. Sammy Dock and Pfc. Kenneth Dock — make up an Alaska Army National Guard Scout team from C Company, 2nd Battalion, 297th Scout Group.

To take first place in the Scout Team Competition, the men had to outperform 150 other Scout teams from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Battalions of Northern and Western Alaska.

"This year's Scout Team Competition began in October 1989 when local Scout companies conducted their team competitions," explained Col. Joe Beans, commander of the 297th Group.

Each company then sent its winners to compete against other companies at the battalion level.

"So everyone competing here in this contest is already a winner," Beans said.

Beans explained that the competition is designed to serve two purposes.

"It provides a training objective for the 150 Scout teams to strive for," he said, "and it provides feedback for the



Sgt. Daniel Foster, top, bandages an imaginary cut on Staff Sgt. Joseph Mute's arm as part of the competition.

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—Sgt. 1st Class Greg Patsey



Scouts head out of town at dusk to establish campsites 20 miles from Nome.

teams to determine just how capable they are."

The competition was divided into three parts: fun events, individual tasks and team tasks.

The fun events were held on the first day, and they included events such as a snowshoe race in which the five team members formed a line, had their snowshoes tied together and then had to run through a 100-meter zigzag course.

The team from Arctic Village representing the 5th Battalion won the race with a time of 5 minutes, 31 seconds.

"It was kind of hilarious," Maj. Ray Coppock said, "especially when the officers tried it."

The fun events were designed to emphasize the need for teamwork and to get the teams and evaluators acquainted with each other and used to working together in friendly competition.

"We are all friends," said Staff Sgt. Timothy Sam of Arctic Village, "but everybody is out to make the most points and win the competition for their battalion."

The second day the Scouts were rated on their performance of individual tasks. There are more than 150 tasks or skills the Scouts are expected to be proficient in, and they had been warned they might be tested on any of them.

Scouts were individually rated on their knowledge and ability to perform in areas such as map reading; decontamination of themselves and their equipment; first aid for shock, injury and frostbite; radio procedures; and filing of surveillance reports.

After a full day of individual testing, the Scouts loaded up snowmachines and sleds. As the sun set and temperatures fell, they traveled 20 miles northwest of Nome to set up campsites and begin the third phase of the competition.

The teams were rated as they patrolled and performed their assigned missions throughout the minus 25-degree night.

"A Scout team's mission is reconnaissance and patrolling — gathering information about the enemy without themselves being detected," said Sgt. 1st Class Greg Patsey of Nulato, who was serving as an evaluator.

Patsey felt he was learning a lot from watching the competition.

"It's good to find out how other people do things and get some new ideas," he said. "I've seen a lot of things my company's teams can improve on — there is always a better way of doing something."

After the final task was completed and the teams returned to Nome, scores were totalled and the 2nd Battalion's C Company team from Kipnuk was declared the overall winner.

Another 2nd Battalion team, this one from D Company of Toksook Bay, took second place. Its members are Sgt. Ralph John, Sgt. John Lawrence, Pfc. James Sipary, Spec. James Asuluk and Pfc. Billy Agimuk.

Others winning honors were:

•Best Team Leader — Sgt. Larry

Williams, B Company, 5th Battalion, Arctic Village.

•Best Senior Scout — Sgt. Harberg Paul, C Company, 2nd Battalion, Kipnuk.

•Best Scout — Pfc. Billy Agimuk, D Company, 2nd Battalion, Toksook Bay.