

68-89

Soviet thanks Alaskans for quake effort Scroll in Armenia

by Steve Pilkington

Tundra Times reporter

Although improving business and foreign trade were the goals behind the recent visit of some 90 Soviets to Alaska, the grassroots meetings which sprouted from the visit had deep significance in Alaskan-Soviet relations.

One such meeting was between Robert Clavier of Anchorage and a Soviet journalist who visited Armenia last December the day after a devastating earthquake killed more than 50,000 people.

(Continued on Page Twelve)

• Writer thanks Clavier

(Continued from Page One)

90-member Soviet delegation accomplished while in Alaska. There are few things to add.

But I would like to tell about one very important and significant meeting I had while in Anchorage.

I'm sure many Alaskans remember the day last year when television and radio informed the world about the tragic earthquake in Armenia.

The day following the earthquake, Dec. 8, I flew to Yerevan in Armenia with the Soviet military to cover the event for my weekly magazine — *New Times*.

I have never in my life seen such grief and death as I saw that day in Leninakan and Spetak. These two cities were completely destroyed by the earthquake.

These were terrible days for the Armenians. They were days of sorrow and mourning.

*I have never in my
life seen such grief...*
—Alexey Bukalov

But even then, the Armenians didn't feel alone or abandoned because many messages of sympathy and solidarity arrived from around the world.

Among the messages was a huge scroll from Alaska with signatures of thousands of residents from around the state and world. There was also a letter addressed to Mikhail Gorbachev, secretary general of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

The Armenians received the Sympathy Scroll and highly appreciated this gesture of goodwill. That is why I visited the Anchorage 5th Avenue Mall and met the manager, Robert Clavier.

Clavier told me about the large campaign he directed to collect signatures and messages in Anchorage to send to Armenia before Christmas Eve.

He related to me how adults and children, civilians and military personnel, Alaska Natives and non-Natives gathered in Anchorage to put signatures and even some pictures on the scroll.

I presented to Clavier, on behalf of Gorbachev, cordial gratitude and

thanks.

The Soviet delegation was well received and welcomed to the cold land of Alaska. And we understand that these close feelings between our two countries are not just an occasional thing.

The Sympathy Scroll will always remind us of the noble gesture of Alaskans.
