

Gray's Contributions To His People

Last Friday, the Tundra Times staff had an interview session with Nick Gray. The interview had the makings of sadness and tragic moments but the man interviewed would not make it into one. Instead, Nick Gray made the question and answer period into a rather light-hearted one with quips and jokes that had become well known to many of his friends in former times. We were talking with a man suffering with a dread disease—LEUKEMIA.

His doctors at the Anchorage Native Service hospital had told Gray that there was little or no life expectancy for him to survive the dread malady.

Earlier, he had written, "After a rather large blood transfusion I am experiencing what is termed a 'remission.' This may last an indefinite time—one day, weeks or optimistically, even months."

As a result of this turn for the better, Nick asked his doctors for a weekend leave saying, "If you don't give me this leave, I'll crawl out of this hospital and die." The leave was granted and the sick man came to Fairbanks where he had formerly lived for many years and acquired many friends.

Last Friday, Nick Gray had already visited many of his friends with the help of a friend who got him around in his car and held Gray's arm when he walked. As a result of the visit, Nick said he "felt better than he had for six months."

The Fairbanks visit of Nick Gray was more painful to his friends than to the man himself, apparently. The man was gaunt and weak but he smiled and quipped repeatedly. He is a man born to an Eskimo mother and a Jewish father. One of his favorite quips to his friends in the past has been, "You see, I'm a Jewskimo."

After Gray's letter was published in the Times on July 29, the Fairbanks Native Association established a scholarship called "Nick Gray Scholarship Fund" in his honor. When asked how he felt about it, he said, "I was deeply touched and humbled by this honor."

The honor was befitting a man who has done a great deal to benefit his people through formation of native associations, especially those of the Fairbanks Native Association, the Cook Inlet Native Association of Anchorage and the Kuskokwim Valley Native Association.

All of these groups have already been heard from throughout Alaska—all of them voicing the need for betterment of native lot in the state. There is no question that Nick Gray's efforts are firmly entrenched within the organizations. The force of his drive will continue to be felt in the process of self-improvement of his people.