

# Tom Richards, Jr.'s Column--

## *Real Morale Booster for Native Service Men: Native Foods*

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THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.,

**OLONGAPO CITY** This is my first column. I will confess to having written material previously which may have seemed to be original commentary. However, this is the first time that my by-line appears with what I will allow to be called a column. There are two reasons why I wish to begin a column.

One objective for this stems from my wishes to keep my by-line alive in the Tundra Times. The desire to express myself before our readers in an occupational hazard to which I am a willing victim. I also enjoy the latitude in journalistic license afforded by this type of writing.

As a reporter, I have to scramble like hell to catch a couple of hastily muttered thoughts from people who prefer that I wouldn't bother them, and then guzzle strong coffee and devour cigarettes while racing the clock to meet the deadline. As a columnist, I have my ideas and my commentary and a leisurely schedule in which to develop them.

When I return to Alaska, I will have to make a living and probably even have to do some reporting. At this time, I ask to be allowed to exercise the prerogatives of a columnist's station in life. Columnists are widely regarded as political operatives, and many are called liberal or conservative writers. In this particular piece, I will assume the role of a liberal columnist.

Liberal columnists like to build solid bases from which we can raise our voices and issue eloquent appeals for the more disadvantaged members of our society. We attempt to lend a bit of humanism to our by-lines



**SAILFIN FOR TOM** — Tom Richards, Jr., contribution journalist for the Tundra Times, caught this eight-foot sailfin while deep-sea fishing on February 27 in the South China Sea. Richards, at left, shows the sail fin of the fish, which was the first of the prized game fish to be caught this year near Subic Bay in the Philippines. The sailfin fought for forty minutes before it was gaffed. Pictured with Richards are crew members of the Cubi Chief fishing boat.

(Photograph by BUD HENSLEY)

by issuing appeals for aid for worthy causes. I have found a worthy cause and, accordingly, will issue an appeal. I want to

inspire Alaska villages to undertake an act of charity.

Many of us are aware of

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magnanimous errands of mercy performed by the military in Alaska in response to emergencies in the rural areas of the state. We also know the joy they bring to village children while delivering gifts during the holiday season. Have villagers ever thought of what they could do for servicemen?

I am not particularly thinking of the military in Alaska, but of their comrades who tirelessly serve in defense of America in distant stations all over the world, some of whom are your Native sons. Can you guess what I am leading to?

Your Native sons, of course. That is how Alaskan villagers can bring joy to servicemen in distant lands - remember your Native sons. I have it on good authority that Alaska Natives in the service become homesick once in a while. It is painful for any Alaskan to remain away from the state for any length of time.

But many people don't know where the agony of separation first strikes, and then lingers on without relief. Alaska Native servicemen get homesick in the stomach.

And the only relief from this type of homesickness can come from Native food. This is my worthy cause: Send your Native sons your Native foods.

Having grown to adulthood on reindeer, moose, salmon, seal, muktuk, dried meat, berries, and dried fish, they really discover how far away from home they are when they are given a diet of chipped beef on toast.

You villagers at home can have Native foods often. I doubt that you hardly think about this insatiable hunger that these sailors and soldiers and airmen suffer in such remote outposts as, for example, the Philippines.

I am convinced that only an Eskimo deprived of his Native diet can experience that torturous brand of hunger. While in Washington, my roommate was

surprised more than once when he opened the freezer compartment to retrieve a steak to broil, only to discover that half of it had been hacked-off, salted and consumed without the bother of thawing the meat.

I doubt that many of you have been so hungry for native food as to substitute frozen beef for reindeer kauk.

Keep sending your cards and letters to relatives and friends in the service, and especially copies of the Tundra Times. That act of kindness is well appreciated. But also send a package of dried meat and fish, or smoked salmon strips, or even a small jar of seal oil.

The stuff might scare off their friends, but they won't care. And when they return home, these Native sons will not only be related to you, but they will also be your best friends for life.

Send your Native sons your Native foods. That is a truly worthwhile cause, and I have generously lent my name and support and my column to it. If you don't have any relatives in the service and would like to participate in this endeavor, I can recommend that you turn to the Society for Liberating Eskimo Sailors in Olongapo City from Gussuk and Filipino Foods, Inc.

This selfless organization is striving toward a goal of collecting ten tons of native food for those hungry Eskimos in Olongapo, but they haven't met with much success yet.

They came to me with this problem, and I listened, and decided to help them. They

persuaded me to join the organization. I was honored and accepted membership. You can imagine the surprise I had at the meeting last week when I was elected president of the group by unanimous vote on the first ballot.

As president, my primary responsibility is to accept offerings of Native food for Eskimos in Olongapo, as well as to ensure that the proceeds are fairly distributed.

If you have not yet known the joy of giving an Eskimo, Indian, or Aleut serviceman's belly the thrill of its enlistment, send him some native food. If you don't know any individual Native in the service, you are invited to give your packages to the S.L.E.S.O.C.G.F.F. We will make certain that it gets into deserving stomachs.

I have only headed the group for one week, but I take my job seriously. My first official act was to survey the Olongapo Eskimo population to determine their tastes. These are the results: (1) They like all kinds of smoked salmon, unless it is very greasy or especially dry. (2) They prefer dried meat which is not fully hardened. (3) Tastes in dried fish tend toward whitefish, and (4) They will eat almost anything if they know it comes from Alaska. Adherence to these standards is requested from potential donors.

Whether you prefer to work through organizations or on your own initiative, heed the cry of those who hunger, and send your Native sons (acquaintances and relatives) your Native foods.