

Gray Given Party in Anchorage

All he could say was, "Wow!"

Nick Gray, ailing Alaska Native leader in the Anchorage Public Health Service Hospital, got a surprise Wednesday night.

One-hundred people staged a surprise party for him in the solarium of the hospital.

They were members of the Cook Inlet Native Association and other long-time friends. The occasion was "a tribute" to Gray for his leadership and efforts in behalf of Alaska's Natives, according to Emil Notti, president of the Cook Inlet group.

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Gray Surprise Party . .

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There was a big cake presented to Nick, and he took the first cut in it.

Notti later read a special letter from the Alaska Press Club, which came attached to a basket of fruit and flowers.

"You are a very special person in the minds and hearts of many people in Alaska," the letter began.

"Your latter-year efforts to inspire and spark the organizing of Native associations, and your willingness to meet with the "interlopers" of our great state are things we all admire."

"The Alaska Press Club was pleased to list you in our second group of outstanding Alaskans—the "Forty-Niners."

"Now we join with your friends in the Cook Inlet Native Association to again express our admiration for you. We regret your illness and we also appreciate your acceptance of the Circle of Life."

"We are comforted to see how you draw on your experience and the wisdom it has given you, and the way you give urgent voice to things which need to be said."

"Be assured that this is valuable to many more than just those in the Native groups. What is done for Human Beings is done for us all. And as we fellow Alaskans are thus elevated in the human stream by your fine effort."

"May these few words be pleasant to you and may your good spirit, refined by your pain, continue to be a dike and inspiration for us all."

Nick later said he had been, "completely" surprised by the party. "I was positively flabbergasted; I'm in a real tizzy."

Nick was stricken with what doctors call terminal leukemia. He is not expected to recover. Now, though, he is experiencing a "remission" of symptoms of the disease and is looking better, gaining weight, feeling stronger.

Doctors will release him from the hospital in about 10 days, he said.

"I've been walking around about a mile a day here. When I get strong enough they're going to let me go."

Nick, an outspoken spokesman for Alaska Natives for many years, founded the Fairbanks Native Association and two years later, in 1964, founded the Cook Inlet Native Association in Anchorage.

This year the Anchorage group sent him out to Bethel to help in the formation of the Kuskokwim Valley Native Association.

Sam: My wife got a terrific new mudpack treatment last week at the beauty parlor.

Bud: Did it work well?

Sam: She was gorgeous for three days. Then the mud fell off.

TEEPÉE TALK