

Governor inspects Army Guard units

by Barbara Crane
for the Tundra Times

Gov. Steve Cowper traveled to Bethel, Scammon Bay, Emmonak, St. Marys and Kotzebue on a recent three-day trip to Western Alaska.

The governor inspected Army National Guard units, met with village residents and participated in events and ceremonies in each community.

SCAMMON BAY

The 92 school children and teachers in Scammon Bay greeted Cowper on Oct. 15 with cheers and homemade signs. After a quick tour through the village, the governor joined the children for a turkey lunch at the school cafeteria.

After lunch Cowper addressed the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Association of Village Council Presidents.

Next Cowper inspected the Scammon Bay National Guard Armory, accompanied by Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer. They were given a report on the unit's training and accomplishments.

Cowper commended the unit and awarded medals to Sgt. 1st Class David H. Kaganak and Pvt. Eva L. Hunter for exceptional performance of duties.

BETHEL

Cowper and Schaeffer then flew to Bethel in a National Guard Twin Otter and inspected the Armory there. Medals were awarded to Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Tikiun, Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Thiele, Sgt. Frederick Watson, Sgt. Stanley Rodgers, Pfc. James Tikiun, Staff Sgt. Leo Andrew, Sgt. Ellen Friday, Sgt. Jesse Hunter and Master Sgt. Bobby Anderson.

In his comments, Cowper noted the irony of his being their commander in chief when in his own brief military career he hadn't made it past the rank of private.

EMMONAK

Cowper arrived in Emmonak Oct. 16 and was greeted by Mayor Stan Peters and City Manager James Ekstedt.

Following a brief ceremony to open a new runway at the airport, a parade of pickup trucks and ATVs made a quick tour of the town. The governor



The AVCP Annual Meeting was in Scammon Bay.

photo by Barbara Crane

inspected Emmonak's new water and sewer plant and cut a ribbon to mark its official opening.

Cowper then talked to Emmonak's 190 students, emphasizing that they should "stay in school — don't drop out!"

The governor and Schaeffer inspected the Emmonak National Guard Armory. Schaeffer emphasized how important the National Guard's payroll is to the community's economy and urged them to take advantage of every training or leadership opportunity available.

A potluck lunch was served, featuring seal meat, and many of the residents had a chance to speak with the governor and shake his hand.

ST. MARYS

Cowper arrived in St. Marys on the afternoon of Oct. 16. Again, he and Schaeffer met with the local National Guard units. Sgt. Michael Sheppard and Sgt. Anthony Sheppard received medals from the governor.

St. Marys Mayor Andrew Paukan took Cowper on a tour of the village, pointing out new projects and areas that still need some attention. The governor then addressed a town meeting, listened to residents' concerns and answered their questions. Many of the comments and questions

concerned the poor fishing season they had just been through.

KOTZEBUE

On Oct. 17 Cowper toured the new "Muktuk" Marston Army National Guard Armory in Kotzebue, headquarters of the "Eyes and Ears of the

Arctic." The governor and Schaeffer heard a report on the unit's accomplishments and awarded a medal to Maj. Raymond Coppock.

Cowper then addressed a session of the North and Northwest Mayors' Conference. He emphasized his willingness to take advice from the people who will be affected by his administration's decisions. "All the best ideas always come from the bottom up," he said. "More responsibility should go to the communities."

When questioned about his marine mammals management policy, Cowper said he believes some sort of restrictions are necessary to preserve the species, but "federal management won't work. People in the coastal communities must be involved."

The mayors asked for state assistance with liability insurance and paperwork problems, and they requested financial assistance for enforcement in communities which banned alcohol. Questions were also asked on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Longevity Bonus and revenue sharing.

That afternoon a large crowd gathered at the Kotzebue High School to honor former Sen. Frank Ferguson and his wife Sophie.