

Alaskan Farmers experienced the same problems as Lower 48

American Indian Tribes — They got forced out of the best lands



LOOKING TO RETIRE YUKON 800 TROPHY — This veteran riverboat racing team is seeking this year to retire the Yukon 800 Marathon racing trophy. Boat captain Jerry Evans is flanked by crew members John Bergamachi, left, and Don Moses. The team won the 1974 race in Miss Hotsy, went on to win the 1976 race in Miss Lindsay Softwater Special, and seek to retire the trophy this year in Miss Lindsay No. 2.

By BOB WESCOTT

The history of agricultural experiments date back to the early 1900's along with the beginning of the gold rush north to Alaska. Many of these same pioneers proved the needs and experienced success in their field of agriculture more than did the average prospector.

The story of success involves thousands of early-day pioneers. Many of the farm developed areas, however, turned into commercial areas for the benefit of investors. The number of people who have tried farming to some degree far out number other attempts toward taming wildlands and struggling for existence in the early day Alaska. I believe that today there remains more people who have done gardening or farming in Interior Alaska than who prospected for gold or fished for a living.

The story continues to the present day, and the enthusiasm and known potential continue to exist, but over the years we continually see agricultural development give way for other interests.

Fort Wainwright, for example, was the site of the family activities of the Busbys, early day successful farmers. It is easy to understand, however, that these agricultural lands were much easier to develop for commercial sites.

The agricultural developer profited by selling the land only to develop other agricultural land. The treatment of Alaskan farmers in the past much resembles the treatment of Native Americans upon the arrival of the Europeans in the late 15th century. while the Europeans pushed the American Indians north and west in search of new hunting grounds until finally there was no hunting grounds left; the tight man-

agement of government controlled lands in Alaska and the onrush of incoming population and urban developed has pushed the farmers off their farms in search for more Alaska farmland until there is no privately owned farmland available to farmers at a price they can afford. The end result could be the same for Alaskan farmers. the American Indian no longer has buffalo herds to hunt and soon the Alaskan farmer will have no farmland to farm.

The Matanuska and Tanana Valleys have both seen high and low peaks in agricultural development from the influx of high-paying land developers and the continued lack of marketing facilities have died, new and young enthusiasts continue working with the determination that farming can be a feasible industry in Alaska. But no longer can farms be developed by "muscles" alone; agriculture now is a big, competitive business that requires big, competitive financing.

The "old soldier never dies" can be changed to "the old farmer never dies, he just fades away." The history of agriculture and the pioneer spirit of the old timer involves more people, more hardships and more suffering than the development of aviation which in itself was a gigantic achievement. Aviation was a "new era" of Alaska when it replaced the early day dog mushing mode of transportation.

Agriculture, however, has been continuing throughout the years without fanfare, financial support and without statewide organization. Unlike the early day dog team mail carriers and freighter, agriculture can not be replaced. for the future Alaska, agriculture is a necessity that can not just "fade away."



SOUL-STIRRING SIGHT — A surfacing bowhead whale is a cause of much excitement for Eskimo whaling crews along Alaska's northwestern coast. This whale was photographed by a Tundra Times staffer during spring whaling near Point Hope.