

- DATELINE GALENA -

Flood Ravaged Galena Miserably Awaits Action

By JOHN SACKETT

My apologies to readers, however, since the flood it's been extremely difficult to find time to sit down and write an article. I hope that within a couple of weeks I'll have everything back in shape to at least make it through another winter.

I only wish that things were as well with the entire town but here it is the middle of the summer and no one except Small Business Administration (SBA) has come in yet to assist the disaster victims. We still have a number of families living in tents and many others are living in make-shift homes knowing full well they can't make it through the winter but waiting week after week to hear from all those state and federal agencies who came here last month and said they would build homes.

Where are all those governmental bureaucrats who promised they would help out Galena? Initially, they stated they would place 52 housing units in a new site through a combined program of Alaska State Housing Authority, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Red Cross.

There was to be made available enough money for fill and gravel streets so other people who could afford to build their homes could do so at a reduced price. With all this in mind we in the town met nearly everyday in planning and selecting a site that 98 per cent of the residents wanted. We even had everyone select a lot on the new Alexander Lake site.

Then three weeks ago some bright young man from ASHA decided that everyone in Galena should move 11 miles away to the Campion Air Force Base dump area as this was higher ground.

We voted last week against this area but at a meeting three days ago our council president spent six hours in Anchorage with ASHA and the state rejecting this same idea and pleading assistance in moving the town. Apparently we'll have another meeting next week and then probably the week after till the snow starts flying.

We have had meetings with all the agencies who piously stated they want to help but for one reason or another can't do a thing and in the end, as I mentioned before, people in government will forget there was a disaster in Galena and we will make out as best we can.

I suppose there is a part of government that shows itself a lot to people out here and creates a lot of frustration and all it does is hurt the basic structure of family life as the ones now living in tents will have to move away when it gets colder.

On the brighter side of rural life, the king salmon are running and there's always a lot of excitement when the first one is caught. The king salmon has always been considered an extreme delicacy which was highly prized and it was the belief years ago along the Koyukuk that if you told anyone when you caught the first salmon you would have difficulty in catching more in the future. Apparently this doesn't hold true anymore as I heard about the first catch even before the boat landed.

On statewide basis I see where Secretary Morton has been touring Alaska. This is good for us as it's always difficult to make decisions about a place you've never seen.

It's to the advantage of the Native people to extend the land freeze. However, it should be pointed out that is only by coincidence as at the present time it's also more to the advantage of the federal government to have it extended as their lands are protected and it disallows any immediate court suits.

I have difficulty believing that they are doing it only for the protection of the Native rights.