



Editorial Comment—

Violet Arrow Situation Needs a Hard Look

There are many Violet Arrows walking the streets of Alaska. There are Violet Arrows in alcohol rehabilitation centers. At this very moment, there are other Violet Arrows waiting in emergency rooms of city hospitals.

Many Violet Arrows turn to Alaska Native Medical Center for help, for often they wind up, not only alcoholic, but critically ill as well. And ANMC helps many of them.

But what of the alcoholic overall? How often is he turned aside with the shallow diagnosis that he is only drunk?

Violet Arrow was mortally ill. Her ordeal of April 5 staggers the mind. When she should have been gently handled, when she should have been treated with the utmost understanding and care and caution, when she should have been put under intensive, around-the-clock medical surveillance, she found herself instead — shuttled back and forth.

She found herself pushed and dragged in and out of cars; she found herself unable to sit up in a wheel chair and left to lie on a hard, bare floor; she found herself collapsed, half on her knees in the front seat of a medical car not an ambulance, contorted in the position because another patient was stretched out in the back seat.

For times she was shuffled around in mortal pain, left on the floor, refused treatment, and neglected in a car for two hours.

Violet Arrow turned to ANMC for help. There will be other Violet Arrows who will go there for help. Will the people they turn to look beyond the surface of alcoholism and see the human being needing help, needing all the professional skills at their disposal, needing above all else human compassion?

Violet Arrow was an alcoholic but she did not die of alcoholism. She died of neglect. Is there another Violet Arrow somewhere today who is also being neglected?

We think that this type of situation needs a hard look, especially by the Alaska Native Medical Center and its superiors in Washington, D.C.