

Notes from Elise

Our first annual CHA Awards Banquet is now part of history. I won't give out all the details now — the CHA report will cover the fun. But I will take the opportunity to express some of the serious — and not so serious — observations I made that evening.

My first observation is that this banquet confirmed my suspicion that the way to any health professional's heart is directly through the stomach. I had always figured our staff meetings were well attended because free donuts were served. But when I gazed out at the roomful of people attending the banquet and realized that despite an open invitation to many people, fully 90-95 percent attendees were working in health or health related fields, the realization truly struck home.

Health people will go anywhere, anytime, anyplace if you throw in a free meal. I wonder if there is some deep psychological significance in that fact? I wonder if the Feds would fund a study of it?

Anyway, the other fact that truly struck home that night was the special feeling of togetherness and pride that permeated the room. There were no doctors, nurses, CHA's or administrators in that room — there was only people who cared and pulled together because they had chosen to make

caring their profession.

Being a typical Italian, I couldn't quite control the teary-eyed, lump in the throat feeling that crept up when I realized how many people in that room had been working together in health on the North Slope for 5 or 10 years or better.

We've been together while we grew from a group of crazed hospital personnel and dedicated CHA's — (circa 1970) — trying to be all things for all needs, to a roomful of specialists with skills to administer to a multitude of needs.

Not bad in 10 years.

So, even though that dinner was especially for the CHA's, and even though they deserved every minute of their time in the spotlight, I'd like to extend that spotlight to everyone in that room — from Charlotte Allan Rodgers, RN who has nursed at the Barrow Hospital longer than even she will admit, to Donna Neakok Miller, who started as a nurses' aide and now administers over eight programs providing for the health of the people, to our Mayor Eugene Brower, whose presence and comments made his commitment to his people's health very clear.

All things considered, we're not doing too bad. In fact, we're doing pretty darn good! 'Til next month . . .