

It's our Birthday!

Each year, at this time, we take this space in our editorial column to celebrate another birthday. On October 1, 1979, the Tundra Times begins its eighteenth year of newspaper publishing. In this birthday message, it seems appropriate to look back over the last 17 years and consider where we have been.

Not counting special issues which are printed from time to time, this is the 732nd issue of the Tundra Times. Volume One, Number One rolled off an ancient hot-lead press in Fairbanks on October 1, 1962. The newspaper was published twice each month until February of 1966, when it became a weekly.

These 732 issues are collected in 17 weathered, bound volumes in our editorial offices. These volumes, especially the first several years worth, contain about 130 pounds of fragile, yellow, tattered newsprint. They represent about 160,000 hours of dedicated research, writing and production by Tundra Times staff and contributors, most of whom have been Alaska Eskimo, Indian and Aleut writers, poets, photographers and editors. Many, many more hours of effort have been applied toward those 732 issues by corporation directors, advisors, and by volunteers who have worked on special projects for the newspaper.

17 years doesn't seem very long, but it is a record of sorts. It is long enough to make the newspaper the oldest statewide newspaper in Alaska. It is privately-owned by a corporation of Alaska Natives, representing about 200 tribal entities and Native individuals. This makes the paper the oldest, independently published American Indian or Alaska Native newspaper in the United States.

The records don't make the newspaper very remarkable. Nor do the thousands upon thousands of hours of effort put into the publication. What makes those 732 issues somewhat interesting is the history and information they contain. They span nearly a generation in the lives of Native people in Alaska, and what a generation it has been!

As we begin our 18th year, we consider our good fortune in being a part of such a great community of Native people during such an era. We cannot help but wonder what thoughts our successors may have upon looking upon these pages when they become tattered and yellowed, should we be permitted to survive to publish and serve for another generation.