



ANAKTUVUK GETS CAT AFTER TWO YEAR DELAY — Jack Ahgook puts the village tractor in gear after unloading from a Herc cargo plane last Sunday. The delivery of the government

surplus machine came only after much shuffling around, looking for funds to finance transportation costs.

— Photo by FRANK MURPHY

Anaktuvuk Finally Gets Tractor After 2 Year Delay

By FRANK MURPHY

How do you move a 41,000 lb. catapillar tractor 240 miles across the Yukon River, through the Brooks Range and into the Eskimo village of Anaktuvuk

Pass? One additional factor: you don't have money to pay anyone to help you.

For the past two years the residents of Anaktuvuk and the BIA have pondered this question mightily.

The only answer found was, "You don't!"

The 35 plus year-old tractor originally turned up in a government surplus lot back in early 1971. At the request of the village council, BIA selected this particular catapillar for use in Anaktuvuk Pass. The council needed it for clearing house sites, stream dredging and, most especially, for airfield maintenance.

The village airfield is Anaktuvuk's lifeline to the outside world which pumps in food and fuel during the winter months when the temperature is -40 to -70 and game is scarce. Washouts damage the strip and the villagers have been maintaining it by hand-carrying rocks to fill the holes and level the strip.

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Anaktuvuk Tractor...

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This January, the village council asked Steve Gage, a young field social worker out of the Fairbanks office of BIA, to see if he could assist them in getting the "cat" to Anaktuvuk. He would of course, first have to find it, as nobody was too sure where it was after two years.

It turned up in the Fairbanks tractor yard of the Northern Commercial Company. Trainees from the Seward Skill Center had kept it in good repair and it was running and ready to go. Now all that remained was to find that elusive financing for for a flight to Anaktuvuk.

Steve Gage called John Shively, executive director of AFN, an old friend and an expert at thawing funds out of frozen budgets. Shively suggested contacting Larry Irving, Fairbanks field representative from the State Community and Regional Affairs Department, who was rumored to have the ability to obtain grants for projects of this nature.

Irving was optimistic, and after going through channels in Juneau, secured \$3,000 to pay freight costs and miscellaneous connected expenses. After two years the "you don't" had finally been changed to "you do".

The answer to the question of how to move the catpillar tractor turned out to be get yourself a cooperative social worker with good connections. As a social worker, Gage could have claimed that the problem wasn't within his jurisdiction and asked the council to write to the proper authorities.

This could have prolonged the stalemate of having the problem in Anaktuvuk and the solution in Fairbanks.

Once the funding had been obtained, arrangements progressed remarkably well. Alaska International Air, contracted to drop off the catpillar on their regular run to the T-3 Arctic Research Station, one of the very few places in the world to which Anaktuvuk Pass is a stop-over.

Due to the extreme weight of the equipment, two flights

were scheduled. One to bring the stripped tractor and one to deliver the bulldozer blade, winch and other accessories.

Last Sunday, only six weeks after the funds had been approved, the stripped "cat" was loaded aboard a Hercules Turbo-Prop which took off from Fairbanks. Approximately two hours later, the giant cargo plane banked through the towering peaks of the Brooks Range and settled gently on the 150 yard Anaktuvuk airstrip.

Practically everyone in the village assembled at the foot of the cargo ramp, to assist in unloading. The "cat" was driven out of the plane to the village hall by Jack Ahgook, and meet-

ing six men dragged a section of housing across the frozen ground.

Since Larry Irving and Steve Gage had accompanied the flight village council president, Noah Ahgook called a meeting of the village council to discuss the difficulties of maintaining the tractor in Anaktuvuk's less than ideal climactic conditions.

Tools and a shed for protection in winter were cited as necessities for keeping the machinery in good repair.

Irving explained that no additional funds were available this year, so he and the council began planning for next year. With one long-standing problem resolved, the people of Anaktuvuk Pass had little time to celebrate before buckling down to solving the next one.



DELIVERY ACCOMPLISHED — Larry Irving, field representative for the Community and Regional Affairs Agency presents Noah Ahgook, mayor of Anaktuvuk Pass, with the crank for the

caterpillar tractor delivered to the village Sunday. The tractor is much needed for maintaining the village's airstrip.

— Photo by FRANK MURPHY