

Native leaders mourn death of Ivan Gamble

by Steve Pilkington

for the Tundra Times

More than 400 mourners, friends and family members assembled last Tuesday evening in Juneau's ANB Hall to pay respects to departed Native leader Ivan P. Gamble Sr. of Angoon.

(Continued on Page Five)

• 'Ivan was. . .destined for greatness'

(Continued from Page One)

Gamble, 37, a Tlingit born in Kake and raised in Angoon, died June 20 of injuries sustained when his car was struck head-on by another car on Juneau's Egan Expressway.

"Ivan was unquestionably a man destined for greatness," said Byron Mallott, president of Sealaska Corp. and a friend of Gamble's. "The deep grief we all feel is because we ask ourselves, 'What might have been?'"

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In a letter to Gamble's family, Gov. Steve Cowper said, "Ivan will be sorely missed by the people of Angoon, the people of Alaska, the Native community and by all of us who knew him."

"He was a young man, but he made major contributions in the time that was allotted to him. He will not be forgotten."

Gamble had been one of two Native representatives on the Personnel Task Force of Cowper's Management Transition Team.

The accident occurred early in the morning June 20, about four miles from downtown Juneau. The second car involved, driven by Christian William Peterson, 42, was in the passing lane of an expressway and was headed in the wrong direction, according to Juneau police. Peterson, who was from Douglas, also was killed.

There were no passengers in either car.



Ivan Gamble was outstanding in civic and business leadership.

photo by Peter Metcalfe

Gamble was outstanding in civic and business leadership.

"I marveled at the energy he put into the projects he took on," said Peter Jack Sr., the chairman of Kootz-noowoo Inc., the village corporation in Angoon.

Gamble was president of Kootz-noowoo. He assumed his position

there when the corporation was in dire financial straits. Today, it is one of the more prosperous village corporations in Alaska. Gamble has been a board member since 1977.

He was on the Alaska Federation of Natives Board of Directors and was a founding member of the 1991 Steering Committee. In addition, he was closely involved with the Alaska Native Brotherhood as a Grand Camp officer. He was a former president and current vice-president for the group.

Gamble served on the Executive Committee of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

He was a member of the Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission and the Indian Education Parent Committee in Angoon.

He graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe High School in 1968, attended Alaska Methodist University in Anchorage and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam era.

Gamble loved basketball. He had

been a Gold Medal Basketball participant on Angoon's ANB and Alaska Native Sisterhood basketball teams, which held five Gold Medal championships.

"He was always encouraging people," said the Rev. Jerry Bennett at Tuesday's ceremony. "When our Juneau Old Timers team would come to Angoon, Ivan made us feel welcome. His team could really have run us down, but Ivan would see to it that we looked competitive."

Gamble's Tlingit name was *Haagan-gaxh* and he was of the Wolf House of Sitka, son of the Dei-sei-tan clan.

He was the son of Andrew and Mathilda Gamble.

He is survived by his wife Jeanne, son Ivan P. Gamble Jr. and mother Mathilda, along with numerous other close family members.

Funeral services for Gamble were held Sunday at the Francis Johnson Memorial Presbyterian Church in Angoon.



Ivan Gamble, far right, and his son helped raise the Raven Pole in a ceremony in Angoon in November 1985.

photo by Peter Metcalfe