

War's garbage keeps nightmare alive

by Bill Hess

Vincent Tutiakoff, Sr., stands atop a high hill giving him a panoramic view of the Aleut Community of Unalaska and the port of Dutch Harbor. Not far from Tutiakoff, the gigantic, rusting hulk of an old water tower lifts skyward. The hillsides are pockmarked with acres of dug-out army shelters. The twisted frame of an old cabanna standing close-by has long since shed its wooden covering, and an old wood stove stands exposed to the elements.

Below, there are rows upon rows of old barracks and other military buildings. Some of these stand intact, others have caved in roofs, missing walls, and some are completely destroyed. Down in the community, there are old pillboxes and concrete bunkers, whose empty slotted openings once held armaments trained toward the sea.

Tutiakoff, who is the President of the Ounalaska Corporation, is too young to recall the evacuation. He is none the less very knowledge-

able about what happened.

During the course of the hearings, much concern was voiced over the "war debris" which surrounds him.

Vernon Robinson, a U.S. Deputy Marshall during the war, and later a mayor of Unalaska, claims that military officials told him there were as many as 165,000 military personnel here at one time. Other estimates go down to 90,000. Whatever, it was a lot of people. When they left, their garbage didn't.

The wreckage is a nightmare to look at, and holds many dangers as well. The old buildings are irresistible playgrounds which hold many hazards for children venturing into them. It was not that long ago that a young Aleut boy found a grenade which then blew his hand off.

"Some of this that we call debris takes up space which we could use for other purposes," Tutiakoff notes. The fishing industry is expected to expand soon, as bottomfishing joins an already booming crab mar-

ket. Big oil is making plans to move in and explore, and possibly to set up future operations.

There is much that the village corporation can do to establish services for them and make money from them. Some of the facilities necessary to do this will need to be placed on land now occupied by debris. Debris such as this is also strewn across other Aleut lands.

Larry Mercurief, of St. Paul, notes an irony in the situation. "Why do we have to suffer this when the U.S. government spent hundreds of millions of dollars aiding in the reconstruction (and cleaning up) of Europe and Japan?" he asks.

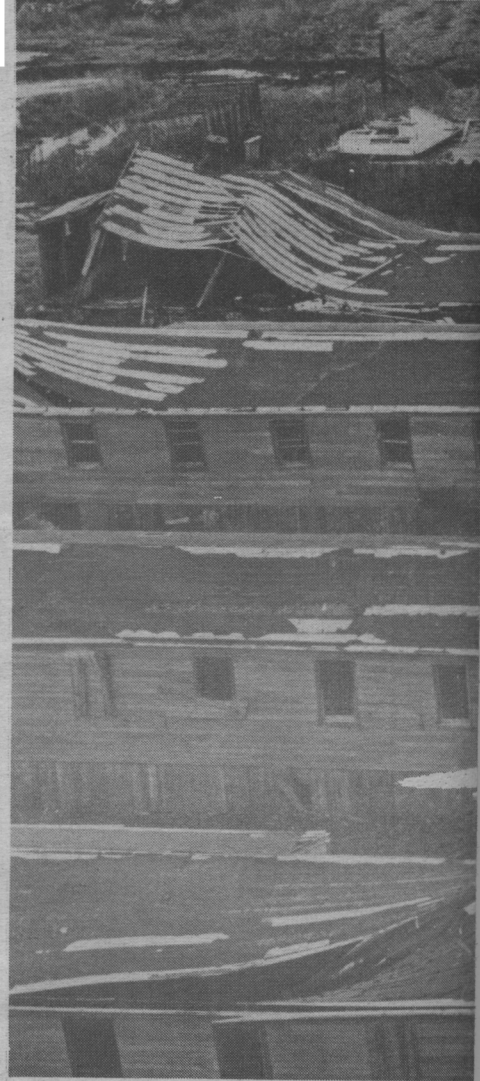
Tutiakoff is quick to point out that while he is anxious to be rid of the debris, not everything that was left is debris. "What some people call debris, we call assets," he explains. Some 25 of the old

buildings have been converted into warehouses.

Forty living quarters have been renovated into duplex homes, which now house some 80 families. Young Aleut shareholders were hired on construction crews, given training, and put to work in the remodeling of these homes. They will have more work to do in the future.

In addition, some of the buildings which cannot be refurbished but which still have good lumber are being torn apart for building materials. Yet, after facing pelting rains and violent winds up to 120 miles per hour, many of the structures are fit neither for renovation nor for salvage. These should go, Tutiakoff agrees with virgually all the Aleuts who address the subject.

Perhaps not all of them, however. "Maybe we should leave some of this here, and never clean it up," Tutiakoff muses. "As a monument to what can happen. Maybe it will help people remember, next time they want to do something like this."



The military facilities in Unalaska and Dutch toll. Many Aleuts would like to see the mess lumber from the compound seen here, and t