

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire

Tundra Times



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Editorial—

The Cultural Banquet

The Tundra Times 7th anniversary banquet at the Anchorage-Westward Hotel in Anchorage on the evening of October 4 will stress the cultures of the native people of Alaska. The idea was posed by the newspaper and concurred upon by its board of directors months ago.

In the belief that Alaska native cultures have rich spiritual and aesthetic values to offer, it was decided that public showing of the cultural items be made at the new Anchorage Art Museum in Anchorage in conjunction with the banquet. We are fortunate indeed the artistic cultures of the Eskimos of the north, those of the Tlingits and Haidas, and to lesser degrees, the Aleuts and the interior Indians, have survived the onslaught of dominant cultures. Those that did survive have values that cannot be denied. They are the jewels of the Alaska native past of which we are profoundly thankful that they are available today.

The cultural exhibit in Anchorage will probably not attain the full value impact of the native cultures but being the first we have ever attempted, it will be the best we can do under the circumstances. We believe, however, that there will be enough of the inherent qualities to give the people an idea that some of the cultures of our native people are also rich in spiritual and aesthetic values.

An Appeal to Retain VISTAS

September 15, 1969

Willie Allen, Director
VISTA Program
Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Mr. Allen:

What is the VISTA Program? What is it supposed to do? Tell me!

Does VISTA mean—helping the Eskimos and Indians in Alaska help themselves, or is it another program paternalizing the natives. Just exactly what is it trying to accomplish?

I have worked with the VISTA Program out of Eugene, Oregon, in the summer of 1968, and the only reason I worked with VISTA is because I like the concept of the VISTA Program.

The concept of the VISTA Program with my limited understanding is that, it is to try to help the people help themselves. I liked this concept of VISTA for I am a native and I know the situation I have gone through, and what my parents have gone through, and what is going on today.

It has been said time and time again, that something should be done for the natives of this great state. The government has passed bills and started programs and spent millions of dollars on behalf of the natives of Alaska. Grant you, this is all well and good but we should be more concerned with the results. There

are programs supposedly for the betterment of the natives like the VISTA program. I say supposedly, because the natives do not have a real voice in the program and all planning for the program is done outside the village in places like Anchorage and San Francisco.

On policy decisions, the natives are completely excluded. The experts in San Francisco make decisions for Alaska. The program tends to forget that Alaska is unique and nobody really finds out about Alaska by sightseeing. After all, they are the people who say that Alaska is unique and we are a unique people.

Natives are a proud people. We have been put down, stepped on, and put off for a long time. I think the native knows better his needs today than he did in the past. The natives know their needs and are starting to request assistance. This is nothing more than the people of Kongiganak and Kasigluk are asking for—they are asking for their previous VISTA Volunteers to be assigned to their villages for another year.

I would like to quote a man who said to the Federal Troops after surrendering back in 1877:

"Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think, free to talk, free to act for myself and I will obey every

law or submit to the penalty."

Is this not a free country? Is not the VISTA Program trying to help the natives help themselves rather than turning them off? Does not the VISTA Program preach about self determination? Is not the VISTA supposed to listen to the native people because the native people know their needs? The people of Kongiganak and Kasigluk are asking for their previous volunteers and the VISTA Administration is simply refusing their request and will not respond. Aren't you going against the true concept of VISTA? Is not the role of the VISTA Director and administration to be a servant to the native people since VISTA is the people's program and not the administrations's program. Just exactly who is the VISTA serving, the people or what?

Perhaps, my understanding of VISTA is wrong. Perhaps, it's another paternalistic program that tends to preach about self determination and will not listen to a self determined village.

The villages of Kongiganak and Kasigluk, from self determination and since they know their village much better than you or myself, requested that their volunteers be assigned for another year. I urge, you Mr. Allen, to grant their requests for they know their needs much better than you or myself.

Thank you.

Death of a Village—

MARCH 27, 1964

ALEUT DESCRIBES GRIPPING EARTHQUAKE, SEISMIC WAVE DISASTER AT CHENEGA

By REV. DEACON
NICHOLAS KOMPCKOFF

MARCH 27, 1964—A day that is in the memory of many, many people and will be remembered for many years by those of us who survived this tragic day, those of us who lost our loved ones, our neighbors, our homes, our whole way of life. The memory still haunts me as the fifth anniversary of this natural disaster, that took the lives of many people, passes. The disaster that took the lives of twenty-three people at Chenega, a seismic wave that destroyed the homes of all the residents in our little village of seventy-six people.

CHENEGA WAS a little village on Chenega Island in the western end of Prince William Sound in Southcentral Alaska. Approximately forty miles from the epicenter of the earthquake, the all-native community was hit without warning by the seismic wave.

THE DAY STARTED as usual, peaceful and quiet, but there seemed to be a feeling of tension in the air as my wife, Mary and I recalled later. We had the feeling that there was something about to happen. Maybe it was a premonition of what was to happen.

I HAD JUST finished painting my 18-foot skiff the day before and I was contemplating on whether I should launch it and go seal hunting, but I decided to wait until the paint was completely dry. Mickey and Nick Elehansky were out seal hunting, and as I learned later from Mickey, they were at Prince of

Wales Passage, about twelve miles from Chenega. Mark Selanoff and George Borodkin were also seal hunting at Icy Bay about four or five miles from the village; these two were incidents, I'll relate later as the latter hunting party saved the life of one person.

WHEN THE SHAKING started at about 5:30, my first thought was that we were experiencing a mild quake as we occasionally experienced, but as the tremor became worse I thought that our stove at home would topple over and start a fire, so I started running home to shut the stove off. We had an oil burning kitchen range and the stove pipes were very unstable. At the time I was at the opposite end of the village from our house, as I was running home I met my wife and she asked me where our children were and I didn't have the faintest idea.

I LOOKED OVER on the beach again on the opposite side of the village from where I was standing momentarily and I saw some children. Thinking that they were ours I started running back again to get them. By this time the tremor had increased considerably and I had a difficult time staying on the road.

I REACHED the dock when I noticed that the water was receding rapidly, I found my three daughters and quickly took the two younger ones and started running toward higher ground with the oldest girl ahead of me. Someone yelled "tidal wave" and I glanced at the water quickly and started running faster, but I was too slow. Before I realized it the water was upon us and in trying to reach for the oldest girl, I lost hold of one of the girls I was holding in my arms.

THE TWO GIRLS were swept away from me immediately by the force of the water. The last word my oldest daughter uttered was "Dad," that was all and they were lost to me forever. I was powerless to do anything. The force of the water carried me past the church which was on higher ground and across a stream behind the church where I landed feet first into a snow bank, fortunately I still had my youngest daughter in my arms.

THE WATER receded again and I tried to free myself from the snow bank to no avail when I heard someone holler, "There's another one coming." I looked back to see the water rushing back and my brother-in-law, Charlie's house topple over with it. I grabbed my daughter and tried to shield her with my body and that's all I can recall when the water reached us again.

I REMEMBER that there was a loud crackling noise, when I

opened my eyes again I realized I was holding on to something with my right arm and my back hurt something awful. I was stretched out horizontally with the force of the receding water and in my left hand was my daughter's parka hood; still dazed I pulled and I was so relieved to see that she was still with me that I cried a little.

I IMMEDIATELY pushed her ahead of me and continued up the hill. There were others ahead and I called to them for help as my back was hurting when I tried to carry my daughter. Mike and his wife, Dorene, Charlie and his wife, Katie and some of their children, and Henry were there ahead of us on the hill.

AS I STRUGGLED UP once again I heard someone say that another wave was coming. I thought for sure we would get washed away this time. As I looked back in dismay, I noticed what was left of our little village—a big pile of lumber—fortunately the last wave stopped about two or three feet below me and my little girl.

WE CONTINUED up the hill another fifty feet or so where I joined the rest of the people and I gave my daughter to Henry to carry for me. All this time I didn't know where my wife and our three boys were. I thought for sure they had been carried away as my two older daughters had been.

WE WERE EXPECTING another wave to come so we kept climbing and we noticed that the school building was still standing. We were headed for the school when I heard someone calling for help below us. Thinking it was my wife, I started rolling and sliding down the hill to where the voice was calling for help.

I CAME UPON my sister-in-law, Dorothy; stuck in the snow up to her waist in the cemetery near the school. Ken Vlasoff and John Brizgaloff arrived at her side about the same time and together we got her in the shelter of the school power house. By some quirk of fate she had managed to live through the nightmare of all three waves!

THEN WE HEARD another voice calling for help out on the water amidst the pile of lumber and debris. There was no way we could help the person and just about that time, the boat, Marpet came around the point and fortunately Markey and George heard the cry for help and rescued Margaret Brodtkin, who, injured below her waist, was clinging to a pile of debris.

ABOUT THIS TIME there were some more people coming down from the hill behind the

(Continued on page 6)

Sincerely yours,

Margaret Nick
cc: Marilyn E. Stadius, VISTA
Eugene, Oregon

Joli Morgan, VISTA
Anchorage, Alaska

Tundra Times

WANTED: Chilkat Blankets; totem poles; ivory pipes and carvings; argillite carvings; potlatch bowls; fish hooks; spoons and all N.W. items 50 years of age or older. Send photo or sketch and prices to: Albert T. Miller, 2235 West Live Oak Drive, Los Angeles, California 90028.