

*Per Wind, Sandstorms—*

# Hensley Campaigns

A campaign trail he hopes will lead to the U.S. House is taking Willie Hensley down some rugged roads these days, with sand storms and an occasional barrage of insects standing between him and the voters.

Hoping to reach as many voters as possible before the August primary, Hensley is traveling by car, jet, bush plane and even flatbottom river boat, combing the state on a much wider scale than in any of his previous campaigns.

Which brought the Democratic State Senator from Kotzebue just the other day, to a lively adventure on the Tanana River.

On invitation from friend and State House candidate Mitch Demientieff of Nenana, Hensley

hopped an 18-foot flatbottom boat, equipped with a 25 horsepower motor, to go to Tanana from Minto, where Hensley had been attending the bush justice conference.

"We started out on what was allegedly a five-hour trip," said Hensley with a wry smile, as he related the story later to the Tundra Times. Then he told, with gusto, how it actually took 10 hours going down the Tanana River, in the company of De-

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## SEN. WILLIE HENSLEY

mientieff and friends Lucy Carlo and Alfred Frank.

There was little protection on the boat for the foursome, as Demientieff pushed their boat through the wind, choppy waters and intermittent sand storms as they passed sand bars on the river.

By the time they got to Tanana, early the next day, the invitation for a moose meat dinner and bed for the night at the home of the Hardy Peters family sounded terrific.

Hensley said one thing he had looked forward to on the trip was visiting the campsite of the Tanana Survival School, some 13 miles downriver from Tanana. "He (Demientieff) kept saying, 'It's just around the bend,'" grinned Hensley.

"Finally the water was so rough that we had to come back," The sky above them was gritty, grey and rainy.

Back at Tanana, Hensley and the rest boarded a topless buggy (basically a Studebaker frame and four wheels) owned by Ted Kozernikoff of Tanana and hit the campaign trail again. About a mile out of the village, the air was suddenly thick with moths, little black and white ones in droves so thick it was almost impossible to see.

"Turn around," said Carlo, a bit unnerved by the barrage of insects. But they kept going anyhow; mouths shut to avoid a forced moth lunch.

The campaign day at Tanana completed, Hensley returned to

Fairbanks in preparation for a fund-raising party in his honor the next night, ate a late dinner and fell asleep watching a horror movie.

It hadn't been exactly a typical campaign day for Hensley, but as he says himself, it's hard to say there is any such thing as a typical campaign day, except that they are generally quite filled with interviews, traveling and meetings with people.

Traveling and meeting the people is something Hensley really enjoys doing, particularly since he recognizes so many familiar faces. After four years in the Alaska House and four years in the Senate, he's already clocked quite a few miles.

"Alaska is like a little town. Everywhere I go, I'd meet someone I know.

". . . There's never a totally unfamiliar community. You may travel 1,000 miles in a day, but it's a little place (Alaska) really. The feeling I get is really good," he said.

Still, there are a lot of problems he hears about in his travels; "A lot of problems people are concerned about that oil and gas development are not going to cure."

Born and raised in Kotzebue, in Northwestern Alaska, Hensley is well aware of the problems, economic, social and political, that face residents of bush Alaska today. As a member of the State Senator Committee on Local Government he has traveled extensively. Two big concerns of Alaska's rights now are the destruction of the fishing industry and heavy Japanese investment in Alaskan resources, he said.

"There has to be a new look at this situation, particularly in view of the Japanese fishing on the high seas (off Alaska)," he said.

"The state should take a close look at this situation in view of future dealings with the Japanese and any other nation that is fishing off the North Pacific," he said.

"If the State Department won't take a major interest in fishing, the state should look at it from the view of state controlled resources, and tell foreign nations 'if you want these resources, let's sit down and talk about fishing problems'," Hensley said.

Taking a statewide view of this and other problems facing Alaskans, Hensley is also finding growing statewide support, "coming from a surprising conglomeration," he said.

His supporters range from people prominent in Alaska's labor and business community to the villages, liberal and conservative Democrats and Republicans, Hensley said.

At the village of Noorvik, in Hensley's senatorial district, NANA Regional Corp. President Robert Newlin and others organized a fund-raising barbeque and dance, then gave Hensley a \$500 contribution for his campaign.

"This is unheard of," said Hensley, who added that the village of Kiana is now considering a similar move. "It's a pretty good trend. If a few more villages did that, I wouldn't have to depend on big contributors.

"It shows some sophistication too. Usually when you go to a village the people ask 'what have you done for me lately? But in Noorvik, they know,'" he said.