

Agricultural experiment is encouraging

GALENA — At the request of John Quirk of the Galena Regional Learning Center, the Alaskan Agricultural Development Foundation made a special trip to Galena and Ruby to review agricultural progress this summer on September 13-15, 1978.

On Thursday, September 14, the participants met in Galena for both an informational meeting and as a special meeting of the Alaskan Agricultural Development Foundation.

During the meeting on Thursday afternoon, Jim Edenso, the state's first Bottomfish Coordinator in the Hammond Administration presented facts regarding the new bank for agriculture and fisheries. This bank was passed by both houses this spring and signed into law by Governor Hammond. It becomes effective on October 10, 1978.

An initial board of directors will be appointed by the governor by November 1. This board will consist of five members. They will then draw up the articles and by-laws as well as lending procedures of the new bank. The primary purpose of this bank will be to serve Alaskans living in rural areas in the establishment of agricultural and fishing ventures.

Jack Roderick, the newly appointed director of the Farmers' Home Administration explained his agency's function. Roderick has been with FHA about one month. This year their lending capacity will be doubled from twenty-two million dollars to forty-six million dollars.

He explained that these loans are made in four categories — farms, housing, community facilities and business and industrial loans. Agricultural loans must be made to family farms, although business and industrial loans may be made to industries which support agriculture such as elevators and barges.

At this special meeting of the Alaskan Agricultural Development Foundation, president Dana Notti explained the organizational history of the foundation as well as asking for ideas on how the foundation could help the communities along the Yukon and Koyukuk rivers. The proposed responsibilities of the foundation as well as the importance of the foundation in its brief history were discussed.

Quirk said the foundation was responsible for the development of the experimental programs in rapeseed and buckwheat which were conducted by the learning center this summer.

As a direct result of this summer's experimental plots, Ruby had the top rape seed and buckwheat in the state of Alaska.

The foundation meeting concluded with the acceptance of a contract for consulting services at one dollar with Robert A. Mitchell of Galena.

Mitchell has an extensive background in plant breeding, varietal selections, and the application of chemicals and fertilizers for disease prevention and plant improvement. He has been the head plant breeder and research scientist for Stokely Van Camp, Pick Sweet Foods and the Grange League Federation.

As head plant breeder and research agronomist for Dutch Boy Paints, he promoted and encouraged the domestic production of castor beans including the harvesting of 25,000 acres of castor beans in Texas, Arizona, and California. He taught high school in southeastern Alaska, and believes in the agricultural development of the state. In signing the contract with the Alaskan Agricultural Development Foundation Mitchell said that he would take his responsibilities very seriously. He will be free to travel throughout the state of Alaska to assist in developing agricultural projects.

Quirk explained the agricultural progress which has been made in Galena and Ruby this past summer. In reviewing progress, he stated that there have been about twenty gardens planted in Allakaket this summer, about a dozen in Huslia as well as the gardens in Ruby. There, Mary Farmer stated that this summer gardens were planted at every home except one. That family had planned a garden but, because of the moving of Standard Oil Bulk Plant, their garden plot was not available.

The gardens in Ruby were especially impressive. Albert Yrjana showed the group the prize winning buckwheat and rapeseed. Some of the rapeseed is five feet tall. The Torch variety



RUBY GRAIN IS TOPS IN STATE — Dana Notti, president of the Alaskan Agricultural Development Foundation, stands in an experimental grain field at Ruby, near the Yukon River. This summer, Ruby produced the top rape seed and buckwheat in Alaska. The Foundation is actively promoting agricultural development in village lands of interior Alaska.

of rape is already ripe as well as the Candle. The Tower variety has grown the best but is not yet ripening. Pennquad wheat was the earliest to ripen. Tempest is not quite ripe. Hokkaido is not yet ripened, the flowers are still blooming.

Other gardens which were visited were those of Florence Esmailka, the Catholic church, Phillip Albert, and George and Judy Richardson. These people made use of the University rototiller in starting their gardens. In the case of the Richardsons, they were out-of-state until the middle of June. The University surprised them with a completely tilled garden when they returned to Ruby.

At Three Mile, the group saw record yield barley. The barley was ripe and ready to harvest. It was so thick it was already lodging. Don Honea showed the group a new calf that his family is caring for. When asked what they would do with the calf, Don replied, "We're gonna feed the winning Iditarod team into Nome this year."

At the Six Mile site, twice as much ground was cleared and planted as last year. The ground was all permafrost before starting and this shows in this year's crop. The ground which had been planted last year was under rye over five feet tall.

Quirk showed the group a horse-drawn mower bar behind the state shop. "I wouldn't exactly say that the University has

us on an austere budget," he noted as the group asked how he was going to mow with no sickle bar. He replied that there is a sickle bar in the shop under repair. As he noticed Roderick looking at the iron wheels he remarked, "If the University ever produces a mower, this will become a museum piece."

At Galena, Quirk showed the group the museum piece that the University donated to the project last year. The combine had been placed at the Tanana Valley Fair and was in the process of being donated to the Fair when the Regional Learning Center received it. Recently, it was used to thresh twenty-two bags of grain in Galena.

Community participation in Galena was also very impressive. There, two calves are walked daily in their wooden pens through the swamp grass behind the new school. Community residents have gardens at home, inside the Air Force dike, and at the University site at the dry lake.