

## Letters

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We had our Christmas Party in the Ft. Yukon Community Center. Santa Claus arrived at about 2:45 pm with all the gifts and candy that your association helped him get together for the Ft. Yukon children. He is a chubby jolly fellow with greetings and gifts for all the children. Each child has a chance to sit on his lap and then he went around the room with his great bag handing out toys and candy and having a marvelous visit. The local educational television station broadcasted the event live in color for the older people and sick people who could not attend. We had a crowd of about 400 at the party. Refreshments were served by several of the local high school beauties in mini skirts. Each child received 2 gifts and goodies. We had about 50 presents left over these were given to the Episcopal church to distribute to the children in the community which would benefit the most from them.

Oh! If only you would have seen all the happy excited children they all but clammered all over the jolly fellow. Some of the little ones were afraid at first but soon came to love him also. And we had even the babies present all the way from 2 weeks old on up! We also had some children from the surrounding villages at the party. What a treat for all. We really don't have words to express our gratitude and appreciation to you and your organization for the wonderful gifts and treats.

We want the whole state to know our appreciation so we are sending copies of this letter to the two Fairbanks newspapers and a copy to the Director of Family and Children Services, Mr. Stanley P. Harris.

We want you to know that each and every person here in Ft. Yukon will not long forget the Community Party and your efforts in bringing it to the children here.

Very Sincerely,

Mrs. Susan Peter  
Chairman-Community Party

## Its Almost Too Late

January 3, 1974

Dear Sirs:

Information has come to us that bill S. 1983, anti-trap-snare, was passed by the Senate and should be out of committee soon. It now has to go before the House of Representatives. If it passes the trapping is finished for Alaskan villagers.

Write that letter to your Senator or Representative now before it is too late.

Sincerely yours,  
Joe Delia  
Skwentna, Alaska 99667

## Oogruk ...

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Oogruk, the great bearded seal, has been one of the great boons of the Eskimo of the Arctic. Without this animal, the Eskimo would not have been able to get some of his most necessary materials for living in the north. Whale hunting would have been almost impossible without this important animal.

Oogruk must be held in high regard by the Eskimo in his long battle of survival.

# Bush Fliers Are First Victims of Allocation ...

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shortage threatens to come home to them as perhaps it has nowhere else in the nation.

The fuel shortage threatens to claim its first Alaskan aviation victim—an air taxi operator who is threatened with extinction because he can't get aviation fuel.

And for the 16-odd villages Harold's Air Service serves out of Galena and Ruby, that means a probable curtailment of what, in effect, is a village ambulance, service, supplier of food and medical supplies, and lifeline to other areas.

"Harold's is the first victim we've heard of," said James Dodson, executive director of the Alaska Air Carriers Association. His outlook for the rest of the small air carriers in the state is grim. Harold's he said, "probably is the first of many that will begin to experience fuel shortages."

For years, Harold Esmailka operated his taxi service out of Ruby. In September, however, he expanded his operations and opened a base in Galena, the central supply line for the villages that ring it.

His business jumped marked-

ly and by November and December he was flying about 100 hours each out of Ruby and Galena.

It was in mid-December that the sky fell on Esmailka's four-airplane operation. Suddenly, Standard Oil refused to sell him the fuel he needed from its Galena bulk plant.

The availability of that fuel, maika said, was the reason he'd set up a base in Galena.

Said John Billings, Harold's pilot and manager of the Galena office: "Standard wouldn't fill our orders for January, and so we had to go to the Galena dealer to get it."

The Galena dealer for aviation fuel from Standard's bulk plant is Norm Yaeger, the operator of Galena Air Service, Harold's competitor.

Standard cut Yaeger's fuel allowance, too, to 2,000 gallons monthly.

With this fuel, Billings said, Yaeger must supply his own operations, refueling aircraft flying through, and Harold's Air Service as well.

"He's given us all the fuel he can," Billings said, and added, Yaeger also probably will have to cut back service.

For January, Yaeger was able to sell 500 gallons to Harold's. "We used 300 gallons of that the first three days in January," Billings said, and Harold's February supply will be cut to 300 gallons. The 500 gallons, Billings said, represent 34 hours of flight time—"not even enough to cover expenses."

Before Standard's action this month, both air taxi operators were flying at capacity—and business still coming in.

Ironically, Standard has on hand 21,000 gallons of aviation fuel—enough to supply both of Galena's air taxi operators and the aircraft that stop for refueling as well.

The Galena air taxi operators' plight is one that has the operators, village leaders, and the air association scratching their heads in bewilderment.

They estimate there will be a surplus of 9,000 gallons of aviation fuel in the Standard bulk plant when additional fuel is delivered up the Yukon River by barge in June. "It makes no sense that that fuel can't be used now," said Dodson.

The problem, they all agree, is federal government inaction and vagueness.

Last month, Alaska was exempted from fuel allocations imposed on a voluntary basis nationwide. Nevertheless, Dodson said, the federal Office of Energy Allocation has failed to tell oil companies what they may or may not do in Alaska.

As a result, he said, Standard Oil justifiably is following its national fuel allocation plan in Alaska as well as the Lower 48.

The Alaska air taxi industry is asking that it be allowed to obtain 100 per cent of fuel it needs for service, up to 150 per cent of 1972 usage.

The reason for this request is simple, according to Jimmy Huntington, long-time Galena-area Native leader, author, dog musher and official for the Koyuk Development Corp.

"Air taxis are the only form of transportation in Alaska's Interior," Huntington said. "Trav-

el by air taxi is growing by leaps and bounds."

"Some of those officials in Washington ought to come up here and see—we're not like the Outer 48. And 85 to 90 per cent of our business is carried on by air," he said. Big cities like Chicago, Washington and Seattle use cabs, buses and trains, he said, "but out here, our buses, cabs and trains are the air taxis—and perhaps people just don't understand that."

He estimates that 100 per cent of Alaskans living in bush villages have flown at some time in their lives.

Losing an air taxi service such as Harold's, Huntington said, "would be just like cutting our arm off."

Esmailka, himself, describes best the effect of curtailed air taxi services in his villages.

"In December, alone, we had to fly out three times for emergencies that were so bad we had to fly the people directly to the Fairbanks Hospital."

He's got 15 trappers in the wilderness working their lines, waiting for Esmailka, to pick them up when the time comes. "I've never lost a trapper yet," he said, and added his aircraft are their only way home.

When Consolidated Airlines flies most food and medical supplies to the villages, Esmailka said, but Harold's and Galena Air Services also fly their share. And if Wien is required to cut back some of its flights, Dodson said, the food and medicine probably will increasingly need to be sent by the small air taxis.

"I just spent \$12,000 installing single sideband radios in some of the villages," Esmailka said, to give residents there an extra lifeline to help.

Because of the airplane, Esmailka said, the quality of life in Alaska villages has improved—grocers can overturn stock more quickly and provide nutritional foods, and villages have adapted to modern travel in place of dog sleds.

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## Pipeline Feud ...

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under the control of the United States at the same time utilizing American labor thereby benefiting U.S. economy.

He said this would not be true if Canadian Arctic Gas pipeline were to be built and that Alaska would benefit much sooner with the construction of El Paso line.

Carameros projected that the Trans-Alaska Gas Pipeline would begin construction around the completion time of the Alyeska oil pipeline.

Some 5,500-man labor force that will have been working on the oil line would then be transferred over to the El Paso project and work for additional two to three years construction period.

He indicated that the line would be buried underground probably almost all the way due to the fact that it would be chilled before it is transported.

Carameros also pointed out that the El Paso pipeline and the liquefaction facilities would create 600 permanent jobs for Alaskans from the expected 25 year-plus operation of pumping gas from Prudhoe Bay.

He said this projection was based on a previously announced 26 trillion cubic feet of proved reserves available on the North Slope. He added that if additional and substantial reserves were announced in the future, the 42-inch pipeline now in the plans would be increased to 48 inches.

At the end of the meeting, George Carameros and several other officials of the El Paso Natural Gas Company expressed confidence that they had gained support for their project.

Last Sunday, Alaska Governor William A. Egan indicated support of the El Paso gas pipeline during a televised debate between two high officials of two companies.

The two men were Howard Boyd, El Paso chairman of the board and Robert Ward, president of the Alaska branch of the Canadian Arctic Gas study group.

After the debate, Ward expressed disappointment saying that Gov. Egan and the public should wait until El Paso and the Arctic Gas made their for-

mal application to the Federal Power Commission before expressing support one way or the other.

At any rate, the gas reserve pie of Alaska's North Slope is not for the taking as yet because the El Paso Natural Gas Co. and the Canadian Arctic Gas have much to do to convince the FPC, the Congress, the Lower 48 states as well as the State of Alaska before one or the other is allowed to develop the huge Alaskan Arctic resource.

The sudden prominence of the argument of the two firms at this time did surprise a lot of people in the state.

## Taking A Slow Plane ...

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man who owns and operates Johnny's Express.

Johnny recently bought a new Champion Citabria, a two-seater with dual controls, powered by a Lycoming 150 horse engine. He invited me to join him on a flight sometime. I suggested we go out on the following Wednesday.

Johnny filed a flight plan for Bettles and Anaktuvik Pass, and we set out for the field early on Wednesday morning. He warmed the engine, kicked the skis loose of the ground, and we lifted off in the dark in less runway than one can find in the average backyard.

Dawn broke as we crossed the Yukon and we got a good view of the ice bridge the oil companies are building for the winter road near Stevens Village.

The view is much better when one can figure his altitude in hundreds of feet, rather than thousands, and when your airplane churns away at a pleasant 110 miles an hour.

We didn't have any cocktail peanuts, but Johnny's wife, Olive, had packed coffee, cookies and sandwiches, which were a whole lot more filling.

Other than speed, the only disadvantage to this method of transportation is that Champion does not build toilets in their Citabrias.

But after a brief stop at Bet-

tles, we were ready to continue our trip.

Crawling at a comfortable speed up the John River, past Gunsight Mountain and Crevice Creek, up toward Anaktuvik at a height of a couple of hundred feet, I remembered what so many Native hunters had to say about airborne trophy hunters and their hired guides during the last hunting season.

It is easy to understand why they are bitter. At that speed and altitude, there isn't much that is hidden from view. Big game is easy to spot, and even tracks of smaller animals can be seen.

We had hoped to land at Anaktuvik, spend an hour in the village, and return to Fairbanks during daylight. But as we got to the village, the weather started to close in.

A pilot at Bettles warned us against landing on the runway at Anaktuvik with skis, so we made a couple of passes over the village, catching the attention of two men on snow machines, and landed on the lake.

I began to wonder what the field must be like as we touched down on the ice, bouncing over caked snow patches and nearly scraping a wing, eventually sliding to a halt.

As soon as the airplane stopped, fog began rolling in, obscuring the north end of the pass. After five minutes ground time,

we took off again, and flew over two snow machines and five moose before landing at Bettles to refuel and have lunch.

Half an hour after leaving Bettles for Fairbanks, we ran across a herd of thousands of caribou, which covered most of Caribou Mountain and two neighboring ridges. Feeding must have been good, because they hardly stirred while we made several passes.

I couldn't see any place to land, but Johnny pointed to a snow patch the size of a tennis court and said he thought he could land there. We talked it over, but as Johnny was having trouble with his landing light and darkness was a short time off, we decided to return to Fairbanks.

Turning away from the herd, I tried to think of all that wonderful caribou stew we were leaving behind, but comforted myself with thoughts of longer flights on longer days.

We landed in Fairbanks in the last light of day. After draining the oil and replacing wing and nose covers, I began to wonder what it would take to force the airlines to resurrect the Norseman. Impossible perhaps, but at least they could get rid of those darn tiny bags of cocktail peanuts.

In some airplanes, and with some people, it is still fun to fly in Alaska.