

- DATELINE GALENA - Devastating Flood At Galena Village

By JOHN SACKETT

People may knock the Natives all they want but they can never equal the compassion they have for one another. We're experiencing of the greatest floods (right now) in Galena and people are unselfishly helping one another by picking up, sharing tents and food. Add mucking out houses as gigantic icebergs and tons of logs lay surrounding the houses.

In spite of the fact that 50 per cent of the homes had structural damage with many complete separating, and floating off of foundations and being crushed by ice, spirits are relatively good and the citizens are planning to clear out the silt and get their homes back in shape. Getting the homes back into livable condition may take about a month, however friends and relatives in other homes all caring for the families.

The military may have left us on the outside of the Galena dike susceptible to floods when they built the air force base, however I do have to give them credit for assisting in the evacuation and feeding many of the women and children during the duration of

the flood. Their assistance, I'm sure, was appreciated especially by the families lacking transportation. That will probably be the outside help we will probably ever see as nearly everyone else not really affected by the water was busy riding through the town watching or taking pictures and not giving any assistance.

I apologize if I sound negative in this instance, however it makes a person mad to see a lot of people sitting there snapping pictures when he's trying desperately to save his home and belongings from total ruin.

We even had the Governor down here traveling around. Realistically I don't think the trip will mean a thing in terms of assisting the people but I suppose if I were in his position I would want to do the same thing.

The state has never had any type of program available to assist rural Alaskans during disaster as they have for the major cities, except possibly the make-work project afterwards by Rural Development, but if they want to do something now they ought to send down a team of carpenters to help the families rebuild and move their houses back on their foundations or let the citizens utilize the state equipment back at the base.

We have available in the surrounding area a number of cats and cranes which would assist the villagers. I would suggest that the state even think of giving out some loans for rebuilding purposes—a concept they have never thought of using before in rural Alaska.

However as I mentioned before, it would not surprise me if the top officials continue to ride around and the pictures continue being snapped and in the end we make out as best we can.



JOHN SACKETT—Pauses in the middle of salvage operations to talk to a Tundra Times reporter. His lodge and general store went about five feet deep.