

# PAUL FRIGGENS WRITES ABOUT ALASKA

By BETSY BRENNEMAN  
Staff Writer

Paul Friggens has been writing for Reader's Digest for 29 years. During much of that time his "yearning desire" to know more about Alaska persisted and he began writing about the state in 1969 with a story on the oil strike on the North Slope. Two more pipeline articles followed, the most recent appearing over a year ago after he traveled the full length of the line.

As he became aware of the land claims issue, Friggens began gathering material, talking to native leaders like Emil Notti, John Borbridge, Willie Hensley and Howard Rock, and keeping

up an active file. In the back of his mind he was "writing" a future article on the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

But he decided to wait until the act was implemented and the corporations were off and running. "This is a very complex place," he says. "You don't just come up here and write a piece on Alaska overnight unless it's very superficial."

At the same time another idea was brewing. Friggens decided that it was time that Reader's Digest's estimated 100 million readers worldwide know about Howard Rock. Friggens had met with Rock, founder,

publisher and editor of the Tundra Times, several times in the past and says that he found him to be "one of the most interesting, sensitive, quiet, soft-spoken people I'd ever met."

This summer, when he returned to Alaska for his sixth trip, the roving editor from Boulder, Colorado, was shocked to learn that Rock has passed away in April. Now, the personality piece may never be written.

However, an article on land claims is being seriously considered by the magazine,

although Friggens says he never knows when and if any of his stories will finally appear. He's fascinated with the idea of bush stockholders and says he's very impressed with the cadre of young, capable, articulate natives in government and business management.

Paul Friggens also says that when he speaks with state officials and other knowledgeable people, it is universally agreed that the impact of land claims is just beginning and that it will be far beyond what anyone suspected. He's convinced

that the native corporations are a tremendous force in the development of capital for the state.

An update on the pipeline may also come out of information he's gathering this month but what Friggens would really like to do is submit a piece on Alaska for the Digest's "Armchair Travel Log." It hasn't been done before and he says it would not just be about the state's amazing natural wonders, but also about the Alaskan spirit, its people, its motivations, and its future.