

Men of many pasts gather to mark campaign

By MARI SARDI
for the London Times

For many on the small plane, it was a time for remembering back almost 40 years as their aircraft sped past the sheer cliffs of Unalaska and bounced down the landing strip.

Many were remembering landings they had made here when they served in combat in the Aleutians almost four decades ago.

Traveling toward town, the visitors bounced along the new highway, a mile-and-one-quarter road under construction. They poked as their car passed a half-burned caterpillar tractor buried above its tracks in mud.

The car's driver called to a crewman. Everyone seemed to know everyone else in this small town. A strong sense of comradeship was obvious in this

town of diverse ethnic populations.

The diversity was present in the men who had just arrived on the plane. They came from Japanese and American backgrounds and they all had been here before — 40 years before fighting for a razor-thin strip of land in a stormy sea.

Their fights were remembered as the visitors, one a Japanese admiral, others American military officials, passed a bridge known as "the bridge to the other side." The bridge has made one community of the two small sections which shared the damage and suffering caused by the first Japanese air strikes in Alaska on June 3 and 4 in 1942.

As American, Aleut, Canadian and Japanese veterans and representatives gathered for the event, the Aleut community faced another sort of bridge

— one reaching across time and memories to heal the bitterness which sprang from that war.

For many the memories and feelings are understandably hard in dying. It would be hard to find a person who was alive in those times who didn't lose a loved one or friend in the events following the attacks.

Others, recognizing that the dedication is to honor all who suffered and died during the war, including Aleut civilians, have crossed that "bridge." On this day, they met to honor their friends and relatives, many of whom did not live to return to the islands.

Philemon Tutiakoff, Chairman, Aleut-Pribilof Island Association, expresses that for him, the dedication is a special time, months away from that moment when Ted Spencer,

president of the Alaska Historical Aircraft Association, called him. Together they conceived of a dedication that would be international in scope, unique of its kind.

To determine an inscription for the monument, a contest was held. A seventh grade student, Beth Routh from Unalaska, won.

Representatives from each participating group would gather at the monument, a large stone to be inscribed with these words:

This monument is dedicated to:

**Those who suffered
and knew the pain of war;
to those who fought
and to those who died;
to the many who defended
their country bravely.**

**This monument is
in your honor -
Aleut Civilians**

**U.S. Military Personnel
Canadian Military Personnel
Japanese Military Personnel
1942-1945**

The ceremony was held early Saturday afternoon, June 5, 1982. Father Ismail Gromoff, Unalaska Russian Orthodox priest, blessed the monument. Joining him in the blessing was the Unalaska church choir.

One by one, representatives placed floral wreaths at the base of the monument, honoring those who served, suffered, or died on both sides of the war, civilian and military.

"Taps" was then played, followed by a military gun salute.

A banquet following the dedication was held in the school cafeteria. Food for more than 400 people was prepared by residents for a potluck dinner. All present enjoyed listening to the veterans and visitors talking about impressions and memories of Dutch Harbor, 40 years ago and today.

Aleut veteran Henry Swanson received a standing ovation as he was honored for his unique contribution to the people and State of Alaska.

Master of Ceremonies Tutiakoff later remarked that the dedication had been one of the best experiences of his life because it had moved beyond boundaries in honoring those who suffered and died.