

Miraculous Escape from Death—

Former Legislator Shot Four Times

"It's good to see you again."

A simple statement? Yes. Many of us have said it quite a number of times under ordinary circumstances when, for instance, one says it after not seeing a friend for a month, six months, a year, five years, or ten years. One says it with feeling.

"It's good to see you again," said Norbert Skinner this week

after not seeing a friend for only a day. He said it with a handshake and a wide smile.

Skinner had one of the most important reasons in man's existence for saying what he did. He had just come back from the edge of eternity. Incredibly, he joked mildly with friends, and—with a bullet still lodged in his head and another on his upper

right shoulder.

Another bullet had gone clear through his upper right arm. Another pistol shot had grazed the right side of his head, bounced and nipped his ear.

"I guess I'm kind of tough and fairly rugged," he smilingly told his friends. "I don't think it was my time yet."

Last Friday night around

10:00 p.m. Norb Skinner had stopped to talk to two young men near the Northward Building in downtown Fairbanks. They had asked him to drive them to a cabin owned by a friend, they said.

Skinner started out driving on the Steese Highway and turned off on the Steel Creek Road. He asked the men whether they had gone too far and passed the cabin and the men thought they had.

Skinner turned into a driveway to turn the car around to go back. As he zigzagged the car, he heard something that sounded like a firecracker and saw flashes of light. The man riding in the rear had started shooting.

Norb Skinner said he didn't know what had happened. He thought he might have been stunned momentarily and the first thing he realized was that the man in the back seat had pinned him against the steering wheel pushing the backrest with his legs.

"This made me angry," recalled Skinner.

He wrenched free and grabbed for the man in the rear. The man went out of the car on the opposite side of the driver's seat. The

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other man who had been sitting on his right in the front seat had also gone out.

Skinner started looking for a tire iron he usually had in the car but couldn't locate it. He decided instead to drive back to Fairbanks. He said the men were standing about 50 feet away when he drove off.

On the way, he felt something on the back of his head. He felt for it with his right hand and it was moist. There was blood on his hand.

"I realized then that I had been shot," Skinner said.

He decided to drive to the Fairbanks Community Hospital. He drove at a rather slow speed "so that if I happen to pass out, it would not be too bad."

"I was in the hospital for about 45 minutes," he said. "They x-rayed me and they seemed surprised."

"I asked the doctor," he continued, "if I could stay overnight at the hospital. He said I could if I wanted to. He said he detected no major damage and that it was up to me if I wanted to go home. So I went home."

Norb Skinner is a former legislator from District 15. He is 40 years old. He reflected on the tragedy this week in the following manner:

"I just regret the whole thing. I wish it had never happened because it causes problems. I have a lot of friends and they're all upset about it. Sometimes it seems to me it's harder to live

than to die. And that's about true. The windshield of my car is smashed by bullets."

"I was over to see Dr. Lundquist today," Skinner added this week. "He said I'm coming along miraculously well—so far no problems. I'd like to say that I'm extremely grateful to Dr. Lundquist and the hospital staff—the prompt treatment that they gave me."

Skinner's assailants were apprehended last Sunday in a motel in Fairbanks. Both under 20 years old, they are from the nearby Fort Wainwright. One is David Gene Becker, 18, H.Hc. USAG and Terry Morgan, 19, 808 A. Co.

The two men are accused of shooting Skinner four times at close range with a .25 caliber pistol.

"Also, that I am quietly and deeply proud of the Alaska State Police, especially Mr. Claude Swackhammer, investigator for the Alaska State Police and Capt. Steve McQueen and the other State Police who came at my request from the nurse.

"I think they should be given credit for prompt handling of the case even though handicapped by the huge interior area they have to cover."

"Perhaps," Skinner added, "this case points up to the fact that it is more important to go after the criminals than to concentrate too heavily on parking tickets."