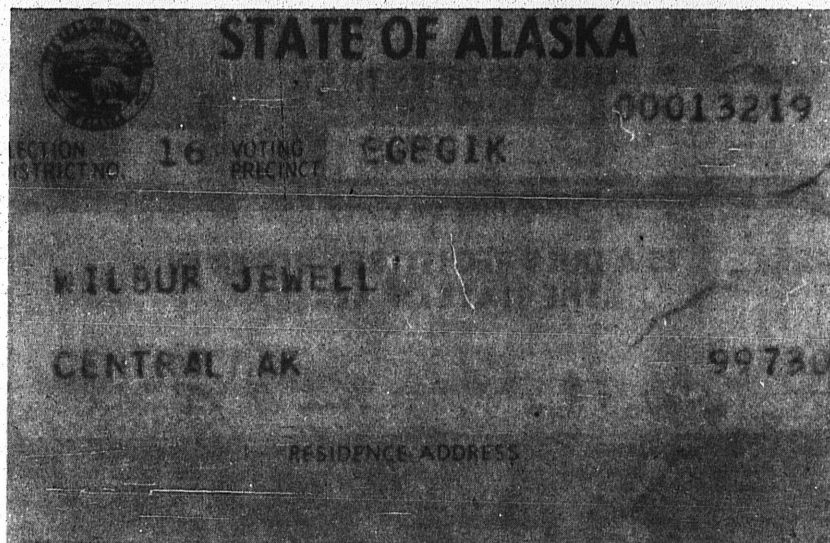


# ABSENTEE VOTE RILES TOWN



**VOTING PRECINCT** — On the primary election day on August 27 in the tiny town of Central, you couldn't just walk down the street to vote because the voting precinct was 660 miles away in the village of Egigik in southwestern Alaska.

## Central Voters Also Sneer at Precinct 660 Long Miles Away

By DON ALDER

**CENTRAL, ALASKA** — Since the turn of the century, voting has been an important event in Central. Located 128 miles north on the Steese Highway, the small community, known as the "Home of Rugged Individuals," has had a polling place.

In the days of heavy mining activity, miners walked in from the hills, the creeks and the bush to exercise their rights and preferences.

As independent in their politics as in their lifestyles, words were never a short commodity when election time rolled around. Until this year.

A new and unfamiliar word was injected into their election vocabulary. Absentee. Central was not to have a voting place, because a reorganizing of the precincts placed their polls in Fairbanks. The only way they could vote was by absentee ballot.

If this were not enough, eligible voters receiving new registration cards found that through someone's error, all Central residents had been placed in the Egigik Precinct, District 16! (Egigik is located on the coast of Bristol Bay in southeast Alaska, 660 miles away.)

Reaction to these changes was predictably varied and violent. Some didn't understand the new system. Some did, but chose not to vote in disgust. Others reacting more violently, talked of some sort of fitting action against politicians in general, and only two that were known actually got their votes in time to be counted.

They returned their erroneous registration cards for correction, and received ballots in the mail. With only two mail planes a week, their ballots just made it.

Now, no real intentional denial of the right to vote took place, but the result was the same. From a roster of qualified voters which numbers fifty (predominately Independent) only two confirmed having voted.

Usually, only 20-plus votes are cast in an election in Central, but vote or not, these "rugged

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# Central . . .

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individuals" demand their right to do so. They feel that right has been tampered with. Any vote-seeking politicians who want to pick up those few but dedicated voters might do well to make the new system an issue and take a stand on it.

Meanwhile, there is a message that those responsible for the changes might be safer if the capitol is not moved any closer to Central!

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