

**'THE TIMES THEY ARE A' CHANGING' —
AND SO IS THE *ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS***

Twenty years ago, Editor Joe Rothstein, pinch-hitting for his publisher and founder of the *Anchorage Daily News*, keynoted our annual *Tundra Times Banquet*, which was held in the Elks Club in Fairbanks on December 11.

He told the third anniversary audience filled with prominent Alaskans how his newspaper had done massive research to produce a series of articles on Alaska Natives.

Joe said 'Most readers were unaware that one-fourth of the civilian population of Alaska is Native.' He explained that his paper wanted to write a series to reach tens of thousands of people, adding 'We have encountered a great blind spot in the American conscience...We cannot help but believe that the system that treats the Natives separately as if his goals and desires were not the same as any man's is wrong.'

The series of articles referred to by Joe entitled 'Village people' received wide acclaim and may have helped to bring about the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971.

In the early '60s and '70s, Alaska was a different place in many ways from what it is today. Alaska Natives were sometimes not well treated by the government and by the general population including at times the press, but there were some compassionate and understanding people around then.

Norm Brown was one of them as were his successors to the *Anchorage Daily News*, Larry and Kay Fanning. Kay was one of the Alaskans who nominated the *Tundra Times* for a Pulitzer Prize in 1975.

Two years ago, the McClatchy Corporation, based in California, bought the *Anchorage Daily News* from Kay Fanning, who moved outside. Since that time, *Anchorage's* 'Good Morning Newspaper' has acquired a big-city editorial stance with more hard-hitting investigative news coverage. It has always been a courageous paper, but there are some almost imperceptible changes.

There has been a 'war' going on between *Anchorage's* two daily papers, which can account for the somewhat 'mean and lean' attitude being portrayed editorially, but then there has always been rivalry.

The fallout effect of the changes has been noticeable to some of us. Earlier this year, one of Alaska's revered heroes of the dog-mushing trails in the Fur Rendezvous, George Attla, was labeled 'unglamorous' among other unsavory descriptions, and references were made to his personal misfortunes by a somewhat eager young reporter from the *Anchorage Daily News*.

Senator Frank Ferguson from Kotzebue also took a swat or two in editorial cartoons and unfavorable stories about his personal life. But Alaska Natives have not always been singled out for rough treatment by Alaska's second largest newspaper. Governor Sheffield and his staff as well as many others have been included and many others, no doubt, prominent and otherwise, will feel the sting from Alaska's 'new kid on the block,' otherwise known as the 'Fourth Estate'.

This is not to say that we disagree with the new and aggressive editorial style of the *Anchorage Daily News*. We know and sincerely support a free and independent press and recognize that it is vital to all of us. We only point out with some sadness the loss of compassion and sensitivity and that times are changing in Alaska as are all of us too, and so the *Anchorage Daily News*.