

# Aleutian reparation hearings come to Alaska

Unbeknownst to most Americans, more than 850 Aleut citizens were removed from their homes during World War II and were then placed in relocation camps in Southeast Alaska. Persons who do have special knowledge of this event or who went through the relocation process will have the opportunity to present oral testimony next week in hearings to be held in Anchorage, Unalaska and St. Paul.

Anyone wishing to testify at the Anchorage hearing should telephone Ms. Pat Petrivelli at (907)276-2700, extension 230, or should register at her office in the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association at 1689 C Street during regular business hours, no later than September 10. Those interested must present

their names, addresses, places of birth, a signed summary of up to 50 words of the testimony to be presented, and a signed copy of the complete oral testimony, which can not be more than two type-written, double spaced pages for individuals nor more than four for organizations.

The hearings, to be held before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, will be held on Sept. 17 in Unalaska and on Sept. 19 at St. Paul. The deadline to apply to present oral testimony at these later two hearings has already past, but anyone wishing to present written testimony may do so. This should be submitted to the Commission at the hearing or sent in to the Com-

mission's office at 726 Jackson Place, N.W., Suite 2020, Washington, D.C. 20506 by Sept. 5.

The local hearings are part of a nationwide query into the relocation of 120,000 U.S. civilians during the war. Besides the Aleuts of the Aleutians and the Pribilots, all persons of Japanese ancestry in California and portions of Washington, Oregon, and Arizona were moved elsewhere, leaving their property, homes, farmlands and possessions behind.

The Aleuts were removed from their homes to internment camps for more than two years. No non-Natives were placed in the camps and non-Natives were allowed to remain in their homes on the islands.

The political mechanisms which resulted in this massive disruption of the lives of the Aleuts and Japanese Americans and the results thereof have never been comprehensively recorded.

Petrivelli, whose mother was removed from Atka to Killisnoo after Japanese attacks elsewhere in the islands, hopes that many Aleuts will testify. "Even though this happened 40 years ago, and even though the Aleutian campaign is an important part of American history, hardly anyone knows about it. It is not even written up in history books. One thing we would like to see is an acknowledgement of what happened; an apology in a way," Petrivelli explains.

She says that it is not yet a-

greed upon what type of reparations, if any, should be made from the government to the Aleut people. There are some who think a monetary settlement might be good. Others, noting that their relatives who died in Southeast during this time and who are now buried far from their homes, feel that no amount of money can replace such losses. "There could be a monument built, perhaps," Petrivelli notes.

The Aleuts who did survive and finally returned home, most often found their homes looted and destroyed, probably by souvenir-seeking American soldiers. Sometimes they had even been taken over by non-Native residents of the islands who had not had to leave.