

Come to your banquet

The first Tundra Times banquet was at the Elks Hall in Fairbanks over 16 years ago. Editor Howard Rock envisioned a splashy, elegant affair. He had wanted to outfit the hostesses in blue satin evening gowns trimmed with white fox fur boa collars. He even had invitations printed up! Though no one had bothered with the RSVP's — the place was standing room only. Alfred Grant of Tanana was the master of ceremonies and provided a hilarious evening. The then Gove. William A. Egan and his opponent Wendell Kay were there as were those who would become loyal and long-time supporters of this paper.

In banquets to follow, speakers and guests provided much glitter, glamour and humor to the annual gala evening. Astrologist Jeanne Dixon, journalist Jack Anderson, singer Buffey St. Marie, Stewart Udall, Sargent Shriver and the bureaucratic presidential candidate James "when-in-doubt-mumble" Boren all donated their time. Dixon even donated her column. Howard, Chief Andrew Isaac, James Thomas, Fred Stickman, Peter MacDonald of the "Indian OPEC" were among Native Americans honored at past banquets. Ralph Rivers, Howard Pollock, Nick Begich, E. L. "Bob" Bartlett, Anne and Ted Stevens, Don and Lulu Young were among the Senators and Congressmen sitting at the head tables with Miss Alaska's and Miss Eskimo-Indian Olympics. From all walks of life people came to help and celebrate with the TUNDRA TIMES.

From the basement of the Elks Hall to the largest banquet halls and ballrooms of the largest city in the largest state—the banquet has grown. Every year the banquet has broken attendance records and last year's with guest speaker Alaska State Supreme Court Justice Jay Rabinowitz was no exception. But even with the presence of celebrities and dignitaries the success of the banquet depends on all those people who donated their time and the villagers who sacrificed and contributed muktuk, salmon, herring, fish eggs, akutuk and other Native delicacies.

The banquet is always enlivened with the accompanying auction. Where else would one pay so much for "hot pants" woven from musk ox qiviet or an oosik? But rare collector's items and Native arts and crafts of quality and beauty could not be found anyplace else. Six years ago, Howard's last and some say, most beautiful painting went for \$5,000 to Arctic Slope Region, of which he was a stockholder. Among the items to be auctioned off this year are two paintings by a young Yupik artist, Uksook, whose works will not only be a good investment, and sought after, but they are a pleasure to look at.

The banquet is always fun and entertaining. For many, it is a chance to make and renew friendships. It is something we all look forward to as the biggest social event of the year. Appropriately, the banquet will be in the Howard Rock Ballroom of the Anchorage Sheraton which is owned by the Calista Native Corporation. What started as a monthly, then grew to a bi-monthly, and finally a weekly, the paper's growth is one of the direct results of the banquet. Howard also envisioned the paper as a daily with its own Native wire services. So who knows? Howard will be at the banquet and we invite everyone to come, too. It's for a good cause,—you, the readers of the TUNDRA TIMES!