

ROMER HEADS BETHEL MANPOWER

SPECIAL TO THE TUNDRA TIMES

JUNEAU—Albert C. Romer Jr. is the new manager of the Bethel Manpower Center, Commissioner of Labor Henry A. Benson reported today. He replaced Ivan M. Ivan who resigned.

Born in Bethel, Romer is a graduate of Bethel High School and the RCA Institute in New York City where he studied communications and industrial electronics.

A former officer in the Alaska National Guard, Romer was previously employed by Tundra Transportation Incorporated, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation and Yellow Cab, all of Bethel; the Alaska Communications System and United Geophysical Corporation, both of Anchorage and the RCA Service Company, operator of the White Alice System.

Romer, his wife, Mary, and their seven children live in Bethel.

Historic Unalakleet...

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We do know, however, of the significant contributions the Unalak Eskimos have made to the other tribes of Alaska, because their legends, myths, folklore and songs have been carried down by word of mouth from generation to generation, even though no written record of these contributions has been made.

(The older people still tell stories in the Unalak language, and some of these stories have been translated into Aleut.)

Late, the Unalaks were captured by the Malemute Nomads, and, a few centuries later, sometime between 1700 and 1867, both tribes were seized by Russian explorers.

Eventually their descendants became wards of the United States government, but they were allowed to govern themselves under the leadership of chiefs—a system of government they had used since the reign of the Malemutes.

Four brothers and a sister organized Unalakleet as a village.

Their great, great, great grandfather was a famous hero. He saved his people from a massacre planned by the Interior Indians.

It happened this way:

One evening a messenger came to the chief to tell him that his village was surrounded by warriors. He went out and climbed the Karhi (council house) and faced the foe.

In his own Indian language, he said: "If you have not changed your minds about annihilating my people, I request that you kill me first, as I do not wish to witness the extinction of these people who have saved my life and accepted me as their leader."

As he stood waiting for the attack, the warriors crept quietly toward the river. Extinguishing their torches, they left the village in their canoes and retreated.

Later the chief told how the former chief's sister had once saved him from starvation, after his own people had fled and left him on the battlefield.

His descendants have kept his name alive among their children and their children's children.

Shortly after Alaska's transference to the United States government, one of this chief's descendants, Moktok, gave the Reverend Axel Carlson of the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant Church of America permission to establish his missions at Unalakleet.

He not only taught the villagers about Christianity, but he also taught them such things as how to cultivate their own vegetables. For many years—about 15—Unalakleet was called the "Garden City of the Bering Sea."

But Reverend Carlson had a difficult time in many respects.

He arrived at Unalakleet during a time of conflict between the Unalaks and the Malemutes. The Unalaks felt that the Malemutes, as foreigners, had no right to try to change the cultural life of the Unalak people.

According to Ojoquk (Rock), an orphan once saved the reverend's life by taking him away from assailants who had planned

to kill him one night at Mose's Point Roadhouse.

And, on another occasion, Nashoalook, the youngest brother of the four consecutive chiefs, saved Rev. Carlson's life by hiding him in his house from conspirators who wanted to kill him.

We do not know who these conspirators were and can only assume that they were Unalak Eskimos who resented the changes the Malemutes and Rev. Carlson were trying to make in their cultural life.

During the Russian occupation chickenpox broke out in the village. Since the Russians neglected to inoculate anyone against the disease, the only residents to survive were those few who happened to be away camping at the time.

Infected Eskimos were left in their igloos to die and were not buried.

Before Russian officials left the area, they gave property to some of the natives. Nashoalook received a Russian block-house equipped with cannon type gun.

But the only visible traces of Russian occupancy today are the names of some of the residents—names like Ivanoff and Kamaroff.

Humorous incidents have occurred through the years—just as they have in any town—and, in their own way, add to the history of the area.

Like the time in the 1920s when the first airplane landed at Unalakleet.

As the purring sound of the airplane became audible, it sounded different to different people.

One woman, hearing the plane, fell into the tub of water which she had just filled to cook dog food in. Another woman burned herself as she tried to lift the lid of the stove, because she thought the sound was coming from the fire.

When the plane landed, people were running, children crying, and some people were too stunned to move.

The Reverend E. B. Larson, who was kneading dough when he heard the plane, ran out with bread dough on his hands, wearing his big white apron. When he saw a stream of people running toward the airfield, he joined the crowd. And when, as the only white man, he extended his hand to shake hands with the pilot he discovered that it was still covered with bread dough.

While the villagers were at the airport, loose dogs raided their kitchens, eating the food left on the tables at the time of the plane's landing.

It was a great day for these isolated people to watch the plane as it lifted off the ground like a bird. Little did they dream that they themselves might someday travel on a jet plane to anywhere in the world.

NEXT WEEK: Important Visitors.

AFN Formulates into Corporation...

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far as interpretation" of the enrollment procedures is concerned.

"We have no quarrel with the procedures," Carter said, but the "guidelines for individual enrollment are questionable.... There is general verbal agreement that these guidelines are not to be strictly followed," he explained, "but we need to rewrite them to allow an individual to register back to what he considers to be his home."

Carter said that the new 12-man AFN board of directors has not yet defined the "goals and objectives" of the central organization as to its responsibilities in the post-settlement era. "Nor is the relationship of the central organization to the regions" defined yet, he said.

His responsibilities are still for "in-house" administration, he said, but, "by strict interpretation of the bylaws adopted" last week in Anchorage, Carter would now be responsible directly to AFN President Don Wright, rather than to the board of directors of AFN.

Wright's job, AFN president, said Carter, is the "chief administrative officer for AFN, Inc.," and "sits as the presiding officer of the board."

But, Carter added, staff relationships "are not fully clarified yet."

Carter said that the 12 regions are represented on the board of directors by the following people:

- Copper River—Bob Marshall;
- Association of Village Council Presidents (Bethel)—Philip Guy;
- Arctic Slope—Joe Upikson;
- Bristol Bay—Nels Anderson;
- Chugach—Cecil Barnes;
- Cook Inlet—George Miller;
- Kodiak—Hank Eaton;
- Northwest—Willie Hensley;
- Aleut League—Flore Lekanof or Mike Swetsoff (This needs to be resolved by this region, Carter said, because Lekanof refused to step down from his position to allow Swetsoff on the board);
- Bering Strait—Al Nakak;
- Southeastern—John Borbridge;
- Tanana Chiefs—Larry Peterson.

Reorganization of the board of directors came about, Carter said, when the three original incorporators of AFN, Inc.—Willie Hensley, Roy Ewan and Flore Lekanof—voted to increase the size of the board from three to twelve members.

Then, Carter said, Ewan stepped down to allow Marshall to represent his region. But Lekanof, Carter said, refused to step down from the board to allow for the election of Swetsoff from his region.

The board was scheduled to meet on March 2 in Anchorage, but, said Carter, because of "serious time restraints," Wright has written letters to the board members asking them if they could meet today—or at a very early date—to consider such matters as

—Organization of regional corporations and selection of land within time specified in the native claims act;

—Problems in the current housing program which must be resolved if construction is to continue through this building season;

—Problems involved in interim funding. "We need the simplest legislation necessary to get us into business," Carter said. Attorneys have drafted proposed legislation to make the state corporation laws compatible with the recently passed federal law. This, he said, would be ready for review by Alaska natives today.

—Contracts for enrollment... "We have to get our heads to-

gether to standardize the approach" for negotiating contracts with each region, Carter said.

—Land Use Planning Commission. One native is to be named to this commission by the Governor, Carter said, but

"we have not yet considered who might best serve the native people of Alaska...."

—Enrollment—some guidelines need to be rewritten to allow an individual to register back to what he considers to be his home, Carter said.

Senate Bill Hearing...

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D-Fairbanks; and Rep. Dick Randolph, R-Fairbanks.

The lively hearing went through most of the afternoon last Saturday.

"First priority in giving jobs are the Vietnam veterans," stated James O'Rourke, director of State Employment Service in Fairbanks. "Veterans come before anyone else."

He told the hearing that the applications for jobs don't show the race of the applicant. He said that when the applicants apply for jobs, they do apply by race but when the applications get to the prospective employers, they do not show race.

"However, by computers in Juneau, they can be identified by race," O'Rourke said.

He told the hearing that the current system that is being used for job applications "is perhaps the best."

Woodrow Johanson, director of the Fairbanks State Highway Department, testified that his agency recently hired 17 persons and three of the 17 were colored men.

He said that in his region, his department employs 300 people and out of the 300, ten are negroes. Twenty-five per cent of the workers are natives and two per cent Black. Statewide, there are about 1500 employees in the highway department and 11 of them are Blacks.

"I have worked for equal employment for some years," said Larry Oskolkoff, manpower specialist for the Postal Services. "In 1967, there were about 300 postal workers in Anchorage and five were minorities. Fairbanks had the same ratio, I believe."

Oskolkoff said that minority hire in this region has improved during recent years but he thought it could be improved. He said there are now 60 minority workers in Fairbanks and Anchorage postal services.

"I would like to propose," he added, "that the Governor issue an executive order that there has to be a training program, not only for the minorities but for the managers."

As the minority hire picture became clearer, Rep. John Huber remarked, "The way it looks now there should be an 'A' for the Senate Bill 61, and 'F' for implementation."

"I have tried for years to get minorities hired," stated Robert Willard, director of the State Human Rights Commission.

He told the hearing that the State of Alaska has no equal opportunity program; that a large number of minorities are unaware of the Senate Bill 61; that out of 7560 workers in one instance, 469 were natives.

"I don't think the State is that much interested in the minority hire problem," Willard said. "... I would also like to point out that there are no field offices for the Division of Personnel."

"The State," he added, "should establish an equal opportunity policy."

As did other people who testified, Grafton Gabriel said that he knew of men who can pass the jobs but not the written tests.

"Tests are most discriminatory procedures that ever existed," remarked Rep. Eugene Miller.

Emery Chapple, Commissioner of Public Safety, told the hearing that there was no lack of interest on the Governor's part in minority hire.

"We just don't get applications from the minority people," he emphasized.

Andy Mischovich told the panel that during his years of mining activities, his family hired 60 native people who met jobs in fine manner, but that when they applied for state jobs, they couldn't pass the test.

"I would like to say something about the temporary workers," Mischovich continued. "They are not treated right. When they work overtime, they don't get time and a half. I think the workers should be treated alike, temporary, seasonal and permanent."

Senator Merdes came out strongly for encouraging work applications by the minorities.

"We have to aggressively go out to the rural areas and encourage work applications from the native people," he emphasized. "The Ford Motor Co. did this and it worked."

He said the minorities just don't apply for jobs because of the history of work discrimination.

Merdes later told Tundra Times that the Senate Bill 61 "needs to be beefed up a lot."

He said he would like to see the State be more aggressive, cooperative and helpful on the minority hire.

"When you give dignity and opportunity to everybody, you are giving an opportunity for self-respect," Merdes continued.

"The Ford Motor Co. program was a modern miracle. When they were seeking applications from the minority groups, they didn't ask for the applicants' criminal record or his drinking record. When you start to interfere on a man's rights, you are walking the tight rope."

He said people who discriminate should lean over backwards to make up for that discrimination and give the minority groups a chance to develop self-respect.

"The Senate should be the first to set an example to private industry—the whole country. This is merely a practical method of giving the equal opportunity for employment considering the cultural aspects and discriminatory disadvantages of the past."

"Beautiful thing about it is that the Whites will benefit—not only the Whites but everyone else."

EARTHQUAKE...

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medium and major earthquakes up to three months in advance and to indicate within 20 miles where they will hit hardest.

He added that such a warning system would allow citizens to take precautions aimed at lessening human injury and loss of life and alleviating property damage that earthquakes now cause.

Senator Gravel said, "Alaskans, with the massive earthquake of 1964 still fresh in their minds, will benefit greatly from this legislation."