

# ● Nome hospital to open soon

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capability is. We can do most kinds of surgery, most ear, nose and throat surgery and some orthopedic surgery, once or twice a year (in specialty clinics)."

The practical reality of the medical situation in this rural region of Alaska is that there is not enough work to justify residency of a fulltime specialist say, in orthopedic surgery. Yet these and other services are needed and the hospital board hopes to provide specialty clinics on an occasional basis.

On a fulltime basis, however, the hospital's six long-term care and 12 general medical/surgical beds will be the responsibility of four physicians and several nurses. "We figure it in terms of fulltime equivalency and on that basis will have 55 people," Guyol explained. Working with that formula, the hospital will have "10.2 nurses in terms of fulltime equivalency, plus a director of nurses, still not hired." In addition, there will be a registered nurse and licensed practical nurse for the outpatient clinic.

## A Long Time Coming

What with use of federal and state monies to build the hospital, plus the many criteria of facilities modern hospitals must meet, Norton Sound Regional Hospital involved more planning sessions and negotiations with more people than most of the NSHC staff may remember at this point. Architects Henningson, Durham and Richardson, of Omaha, Neb. did all the planning up to the design development stage.

Then Durham, Anderson, Freed/IHDR, Seattle, did the working drawings and Morrison-Knudson, Boise, Idaho, was chosen as construction manager.

In addition to constructing the new facility, they remodeled the old MMM hospital to handle administra-

tive facilities, in addition to the laundry and dietary departments. The new outpatient clinic opened six weeks ago, the X-ray department two weeks ago and the laboratory moved to its new facilities last week. Patients are to be moved to their new rooms Sunday, April 23.

Guyol says he is pleased with the venture to date and the overall work of the NSHC board, whose membership includes representatives of all villages served by the hospital. "What it represents is the true integration of health care, through the health corporation, which is just as concerned with sewer and water in the villages as illness care in the hospitals. It's a unique set-up, probably a good example for the rest of the country."

## Cautious Optimism

Guyol is perhaps much more optimistic than some other Nome residents, who say they can remember when medical care in this rural area was downright awful and that it has a long way to go. For years, in the villages surrounding Nome, health aides were the only direct medical assistance anyone had. That was long before any satellite medical case, back when health aides weren't even paid. The major voice of medicine hereabouts has been the Indian Health Service and lots of flocks, Native and non-Native, say they are only cautiously optimistic about what the new facility can offer. Hospital administrators, of course, hope the modern facilities will continue to attract more qualified, more experienced staff.

Will it really be better? "I sure hope so," said one 48-year resident of Nome, who asked to remain anonymous. "We have to improve. We can't go on the way we are now, sending people down to Anchorage and most of the time it's too late." The woman said that two years ago she had bad "problems with my kidneys, but the

doctor I talked to said it was just old age. I was desperately sick. I didn't want to go there in the first place. (The woman said she ended up prescribing aspirin for herself, because the doctor gave her nothing and that she still has problems with her kidneys).

"Most people I talk with feel that way. I'm afraid I'm not too hopeful," she said.

Nome Mayor Leo Rasmussen, who also writes for one of Nome's two newspapers, says that the population of Nome is generally "optimistic and hopeful for far greater kind of health care. But the general attitude toward the hospital has not altered for the past 15 years. The people stand ready to use the facility when they feel the facility will return to them the service they're paying for." (Native residents and dependants get free medical care; others do not and Rasmussen is one of them.) "Most people go to Seattle, Anchorage or even Rochester, Minnesota, if they can afford it," he said.

"If I fell off a bar stool at the Board of Trade (a local bar) and split my head open, they'd be right down there to sew it up, but when I'm sick and I call for a doctor and they tell me to come in the next day, something has left our medical system. It scares me," he said.

Rasmussen also argues that he feels Nome doesn't have enough representation on the hospital board. There are 18 representatives of surrounding villages and three from Nome, even though 50 percent of the people served are from there, he said.

Still, the mayor had some kind words. "We're going to have one of the best facilities in Northwest Alaska when the hospital is complete. They've got a long way to go, learning how to use the facility, but we're going to be better off for health care here, compared to what we've had."



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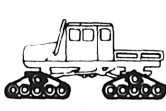
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## LAST WEEK IN ALASKA

A weekly summary of Alaska News prepared for  
TUNDRA TIMES by the ALASKA RADIO NETWORK

**HOUSE SPEAKER HUGH MALONE** OF Kenai testified before the House Finance Committee and urged it not to accept amendments to the Alaska Power Authority Act. The Hammond Administration-sponsored amendments would broaden the Authority's functions to include assisting in the financing of nuclear power plants. Malone said, "I think at present, our potential for hydro-electric power, for fossil fuel fired generating plants are adequate to meet Alaska's needs for the foreseeable future without getting into what I think is a very risky and uncertain technology."

**COMMISSIONER OF NATURAL RESOURCES BOB LeResche** says he was "riled" after reading a University of Alaska study prepared for the Legislature which says the Alpetco project cannot pay for itself. Alpetco is proposing to buy the state's royalty oil and build a petrochemical plant in the state. LeResche says, "...what they've done is taken a look at the past of the state and found that for every new resident of the state, the state treasury puts out more than it takes in. But, certainly, they haven't made enough allowance for the different type of project that this is."

**GOVERNOR HAMMOND SAYS HIS INDICATIONS** are that Northwest Alaska Gas Pipeline Company may be having some financing difficulties which may be alleviated if the state offers to help finance the line. The governor said he's anxious to help Northwest, "I've been fighting too long and hard for this project to see it put in danger unnecessarily. I intend to do everything reasonable possible to make it (the line) happen."

**ALASKA NATIVE LEADER WILLIE HENSLEY** has ended speculation concerning his candidacy for lieutenant governor. Hensley told the Alaska Radio Network, "I have too many other commitments, frankly, to take six months off for a campaign. Actually, the fear of losing at campaign is not what scares me, it's the possibility of winning that does."

**OFFICIALS OF NORTHWEST ALASKA GAS Pipeline Company** reportedly will submit a formal proposal for state participation in financing of the gas pipeline soon. The proposal is said to call for a \$1 billion state loan, to be repaid from pipeline profits, and a \$500 million state investment in the line.

**RCA ALASCOM HAS APPLIED TO** the Federal Communications Commission to provide additional service to the Kotzebue area on the stipulation that they receive ownership of the bush earth stations. The Governor's Office of Telecommunications is protesting the filing. GOT Director Bob Walp says, "They are obligated...to supply quality service wherever it's required." Walp says he does not think it proper for RCA to tie revenue with capital equipment installation. RCA spokesman Tom Jensen says, "They (the state) want to be our partner, again, as they have in the 100 earth station project, but this time around they don't want to invest any equal capital."

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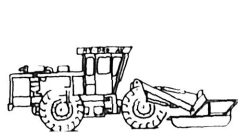
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