

# ALASKAN REGION



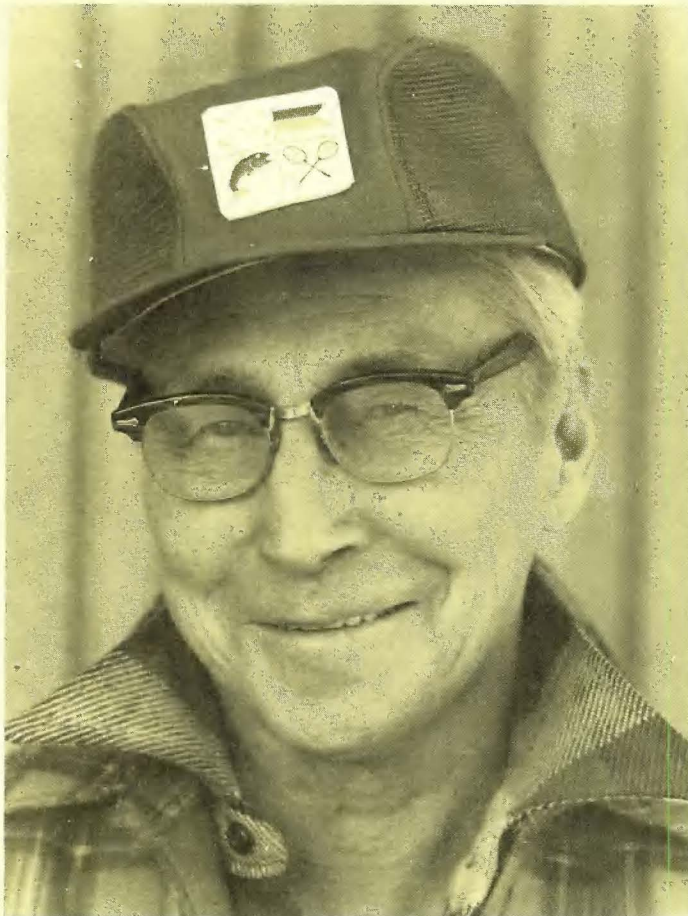
# TRAPLINE

Federal Aviation Administration

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## His Father, A Real Pioneer



Wilfred Evans

(FAA TRAPLINE is indebted to the Fairbanks News-Miner for permission to reprint this story and photo from a recent edition. The article is of interest to TRAPLINE readers because it concerns the father of Wilfred Evans, Jr., who is FAA's station mechanic at Tanana.)

BETTLES--Evansville founder Wilfred Evans, now 80, still makes daily visits to Bettles Lodge, one of the many businesses he founded during his years in the north country.

Evans father (Wilfred Evans, Jr.'s grandfather) came from England to Idaho in the late 1800s and moved to Nome with the 1898 miners. He then moved to Bishop Mountain about 10 miles from the village of Koyukuk where he started a business cutting wood for steamboats and began trading with the natives. Evans says his father often cut 400 cords a year by himself and stacked it along the river every ten miles or so for the steamers.

His father married a local women, and in 1901 Wilfred was born at Bishop Mountain. Wilfred went to school there and at Holy Cross and graduated from high school in Tacoma, Wash.

"There was no dope or drugs in them days," he says. At high school he also learned to run a sawmill and do other work in lumber camps.

# Pioneer

After his schooling he returned to Bishop Mountain and Koyokuk where he worked with his father. In 1924 they built a trading post at Allakaket and, using dog teams in winter and steamers in summer, hauled freight to Bettles, six miles below its present location.

About 200 miners lived in and around old Bettles at that time. The village had been founded as a trading post by Gordon C. Bettles in 1889.

Evans eventually took over the Allakaket trading post but continued to haul freight to Bettles. He also bought a D-4 Cat and a sawmill and hauled freight and cut lumber and three-sided logs along the Koyokuk.

He freighted from Bettles to Wiseman until World War II when the government shut down the mines, drafted the men and took the equipment from the mines to build airfields and other defense sites.

He recalls when the Federal Aviation Administration moved its buildings from Old Bettles to Bettles Field, because six miles downriver the weather would look okay and the radio man would tell the planes to come in, but when they got to the field they couldn't see to land.

Engineers tried to build a field on top of the hill near Old Bettles, but the ground was too boggy. In those days they landed on the sand bars across the river from Old Bettles in the summer and on the river ice in winter.

In 1954 Evans moved to Evansville where he set up his sawmill and built the Bettles Lodge for Wien Air Alaska. The lodge has changed hands several times and has had several managers, but is still going strong and Evans still visits it every day.

Wilfred also shotgunned wolves from the back seat of Jim Crowder's plane, but had quit that shortly before Crowder and his nephew were killed in a crash while they hunted wolves near Chandalar Lake.

"It's a good thing I quit or I probably wouldn't be here now," he says.

Wilfred also had a radio weather station in Allakaket during World War II, and gave weather data every day for the U.S. Military in code.

He also built barges in Allakaket with lumber he cut with his sawmill there.

All of his children carry on his tradition of ambition and progress. They are Millie, married to Russell Gray who retired from the U.S. Civil Service last spring. Millie and Russell now spend the summers in Bettles and the winters in Ohio where Millie works in a garment factory making leather jackets. Jeanne Stevens operates the Bettles Post Office.

Josephine lives near Lupine, Cal. Daughter Marion Van Horne lives in Kenai. Her husband has many years with FAA there.

Wilfred Evans Jr., lives in Tanana where he is employed by FAA. Gerald Evans of Fairbanks is long-time employee of RCA.

## Leon Tallman Writes

The following note was received by AAL-5 from Leon D. Tallman, Star Route, South Effingham, NH 03882:

"I wish I had known about the FAA picnic; I would not have missed it. I recently made a trip to ANC and it was a joy to meet many old friends. While there, I saw a copy of INTERCOM giving names and addresses of many retirees I have lost contact with. Please send me a copy of the issue and put me on the mailing list of INTERCOM.

I spent 10 years in Alaska, ANC, EKL, and the Hill Building as an EMT, and the friends I made there have never been forgotten. I would certainly appreciate hearing from them."

# Cold Bay

By Wanda Williford

The big news of the year at Cold Bay has been the eruption of Pavlof volcano, 35 miles to the northeast of Cold Bay. The volcano began erupting on the 11th of November and is still steaming. Peninsula Air flew a group of people to tour the volcano recently. Late films show a small vent spouting steam towards the bottom of the volcano. We all had a nice view of the volcano, which is still steaming. Now when you meet anyone on the road, the subject of the conversation is "did you get any good pictures?" Everyone carries a camera of some type. It is really quite odd to live somewhere that most people cannot locate on the map and overnight everyone knows where Cold Bay is located.

\* \* \* \*

Most of the townspeople have been busy hunting caribou. For some reason this year, the caribou came down from the mountains quite a bit earlier, making it possible for the hunters to have the advantage of nice weather to hunt in. Usually, the snow is here to stay before the caribou come down. John Sarvis, of Federal Fish and Wildlife, says that the herd is exceptionally large and that they had to come down early to feed. Needless to say, everyone seems to be "gone huntin'."

\* \* \* \*

Cold Bay Flight Service Station sponsored a community Pot Luck recently in honor of the new families of the CDB FSS and the FSS Specialist who are departing this station. Newly-arrived families honored were Jerry Dunn, his wife Mary, their three sons, Roberta Potter and her daughter Bonnie. Jerry is the new FACF here at CDB. Jerry was previously stationed at Bethel. Roberta and Bonnie were

last at Oklahoma City. Roberta is a Flight Station Specialist. Departing from CDB are Tony Johnson, Specialist, who had been stationed in CDB prior to reassignment in Anchorage. Tony then returned to CDB in a TDY status and now is on his way to a new position in Fairbanks. Also leaving the middle of December for Fairbanks will be Specialist Evelyn Watts. Evelyn will be following the steps of her sister Pat Watts, as Pat was at CDB FSS and is now in the tower at Fairbanks.

\* \* \* \*

Thanksgiving in Cold Bay was celebrated by the townspeople with a free Thanksgiving dinner held at the Volcano Club. The club prepared the dinner, held from 2 to 4. Dancing followed the dinner.

I hope that I have not left out anything or anybody, but since this is a first for me, bear with me and hope that I improve with each issue.

## Won't Join

Sign in an Anchorage real estate office:

WE UNDERSTAND THERE IS GOING TO BE A RECESSION OR DEPRESSION. . .

WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE.

\* \* \* \*

## Remember Madeline?

Most TRAPLINE readers will remember the poems of Madeline Stalsby who has since transferred to Santa Fe, N.M. Readers who might wish to drop her a note can reach her at: Country Club Gardens, Space #86, Airport Road, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501.

# Shock Sets In as World War II Comes to Alaska

(Here's another article delving into the Alaskan Region's roots written by Burleigh Putnam who was assigned to the region in July 1941. He went on to become chief of Flight Standards in the Western Region, and now looks back on an exciting Alaskan career from sunny Fallbrook, California, where the only problem he has to contend with is leaves in the swimming pool.)

By Burleigh Putnam

During 1941, the military buildup was going on rapidly. Morrison-Knudsen (M-K) was building several airfields and acquired a fleet of cargo-carrying aircraft.

Harold Gillam was flying a Lockheed Electra 10B practically night and day.

Bob Reeve had a Boeing 80 with a huge cargo door and various other aircraft based at Nabesna to haul cement and equipment to pave the new airport at Northway. Jack Peck was running the Nabesna operation for M-K, and Bob Reeve and his people up there, too.

In late November, I. K. McWilliams, Senior Inspector, was told to report to Washington for duty as head of a newly-formed commercial operations branch.

On the morning of Dec. 7, he left Merrill Field in the SR-10 Stinson, N216, with his wife and young son; they were to catch the southbound boat at Juneau.

It was just getting light and I went into the wannigan that housed what is now called an FSS, to hear him file his flight plan. The communicator was busy copying C-W onto his typewriter and I watched over his shoulder to see what the traffic was.

To our utter astonishment, the message, from Honolulu, said, "The Japs are bombing hell out of us!" He put it on the teletype over to Elmendorf and they replied that yes, they had it too, and the Old Man (General Buckner) was trying to reach Washington.

I knew the military had long worried about Japan moving in on Alaska, so with this news I headed home, packed my packboard, and loaded my guns. Nobody dared say anything about it as the pandemonium could become a disaster.

However, about noon, the military made an announcement, and as we anticipated, pandemonium did break loose. The military was frantically digging slit trenches and mounting machine guns and 37mm cannon all over the place.

The Signal Corps was frantically stringing wires for communications with these new field positions. Civilians were rushing every which way.

That night, Anchorage was blacked out. There was no organization of the civilians. Everybody took it upon himself to be a militiaman; everybody who had a gun carried it.

Somehow, nobody got killed, although a number of shots were fired. Somehow, I became the contact point for the military regarding civilian aircraft and pilots. Three or four days later, things had more or less been brought under control, but there was still a great deal of tension. Col. Pat Arnold was the Air Officer at Elmendorf and he called one night to ask if there were any multiengine aircraft in the territory likely to be operating at night. This was about 9 p.m. I told him no. He said, "Kenai is reporting numerous multiengine aircraft overhead. There's about a 300-foot ceiling and solid overcast, and not a light showing anywhere."

# Shock Sets In

They sent out four P-36's with disastrous results. Two somehow got back. One was never found, and the pilot of the other lost control of his, bailed out, and was found the next day on a cake of ice in Turnagain Arm, barefooted. When his chute opened with a jerk, his flying boots were snapped off.

Jack Jefford and Al Horning talked the military out of one of their L-1 liaison aircraft, landed on the ice cake, and brought the P-36 pilot home.

About this same time, FAA issued a set of emergency regulations that required airman identification cards, and unless on a guarded airport, aircraft had to be dismantled. In those days, we knew where every airplane was, who was flying it, and what condition it was in. And, you can imagine the practicability of guarding landing facilities except at places like Anchorage and Fairbanks.

So, we went through the exercise of birth certificates and ID cards. Furthermore, the military put all flying under strict control anywhere within 25 miles of Anchorage and Fairbanks. It was absolutely essential to get a clearance prior to entering these critical areas. Also, all weather was coded and they didn't hand out codes to strangers. As it turned out, the Japanese never got closer than Dutch Harbor. Later on, their incendiary balloons did come down in various places, and at first, caused an awful lot of excitement, but that was about all.

There were a lot of incidents which seemed deadly serious at the time, but in retrospect were laughable except that sometimes somebody got hurt or a life was lost. Almost the first thing the military did was to issue explicit instructions to shut down all radio navigation aids and not come back on the air until instructed to do so.

Harold Gillam, in the M-K Lockheed, was on instruments somewhere between Cold Bay and Naknek (now King Salmon), and suddenly no radio. He managed to get down all right, but was really teed off.

Three or four days later, they decided to operate the nav aids part time. Then the question arose: How do we get them back on the air? It was solved by sending an aircraft to the location of each nav aid to instruct personnel to get them back into operation.

A B-18 was dispatched to Cordova, but the pilot was unable to find Mile 13 Airport. As is so often the case, the area was fogged and rained in. In desperation, the frantic pilot put it down on the first flat place he could find, which turned out to be Egg Island--at low tide. I do not recall how the crew was picked up, but before very long, the B-18 was totally swallowed up by the sands of Egg Island and the surf.

As I recall, the military had about four codes for communications. In view of events, they almost had to assume the Japanese had broken them. Part of the code problem was that the civilians were deeply involved and had to have codes too, in particular for NOTAMS and weather reporting. The big problem was weather reporting. It was a vital thing, as the Pacific Fleet was immobilized at Pearl Harbor and there was nothing between Alaska and the Japanese. So, a code was developed and changed every day. It was given only to those with a need to know. It was a Lulu and as about as confusing to us as it was to a Japanese, who, I am sure, must have heard a lot of the air-ground talk.

In a way, it was simple, but after you heard a broadcast, you had to remember what you heard and look up what each word meant. This was a problem to a pilot already down on his hands and knees trying to find his way to some small village.

To make matters worse for some of us, the domestic code and Alaskan code did not match; each was different.

(To be continued)



IDENTIFIED AT LAST--We've been keeping the above photo around the office awaiting for identification--and finally we got all but just a couple identified thanks to John Bassler in Air Traffic. Also assisting in the I.D. project were Jerry Whittaker, Al Horning and the late Buck Culver. It now is definite that the above photo, taken at about Christmas time around 1948, shows the entire Air Traffic Division of the Civil Aeronautics Authority. The photo was taken at regional headquarters in the old Federal Building at 4th and F in Anchorage. AT Regional personnel identifiable are: (top row from left): Ray Petite, Robert Finegold, Carl Bassler, Al Hulen, Sherrod Kendall and Norman Beuter; (second row from top): people unidentified; (third row, from left): Margaret Weaver (telephone operator); Irma Lebbin (Atkins) (stenographer); "Tillie" Tillinghast; Bea Kendall; Gail Kosbau; George Trudeau and Bill Hickock. The girl in the front left is unidentified. Second from left is Margaret Turner and man at right looking away from camera is Sanford Peterson. (Photo courtesy John Bassler.)



Thanks to Diana Wyatt of Kenai FSS, we're able to give you a glimpse of the staff of that facility as it looked back in 1966. From left to right are Harry Jenkins, Jack Hummel, and Ken Jordan. A note to other readers with photos of FSS in yester-year: please send them in to TRAPLINE --they'll be returned.

# Bud Watched Town Boom and Die

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is another in a series of historical articles provided to TRAPLINE by Bud Seltenreich, former Flight Standards employee. Bud is developing the homestead he grew up on back in Old McCarthy--a colorful, once-bustling mining town now almost taken over by brush, trees, and time. Even as a boy--and he isn't telling how long ago that was--Bud was a go-getter for the buck. But let him tell it.)

By Bud Seltenreich

McCarthy was discovered in the 1890's at a time when the only way to get into that country was by horse trail from Valdez. People would ride horses across the hellishly cold Nizina River, fed by Nizina Glacier in the Wrangell Mountains. Swift and treacherous, the river claimed many a rider.

Horsemen plunging into the stream clung to their mounts, literally, for dear life. There used to be a saying about the deadly Nizina: "If you hung on to your horse, you made it." Those that didn't were swept away to their deaths in the turbulent grey waters.

A railroad was completed in 1912 from the seaport of Cordova to McCarthy and on to the Kennecott Mine. Its main purpose was to haul the ore to the ships.

Over the years, a bustling mining community mushroomed at McCarthy. Tunnels were bored into the mountains to tap the area's rich veins of copper.

Four mines once flourished: the old Bonanza, the Jumbo, the Erie, and the Motherlode, all of which made up the Kennecott Mine and the company town of the same name 5 miles from McCarthy.

Tramways spanned the steep slopes between the mine and the mill below. An endless stream of ore carts moved down from mines to the huge hopper to be dumped for processing. Through the years, more than \$200 million in ore moved off that mountain, into the mill, and finally into Guggenheim coffers; the Guggenheims owned the Kennecott Copper Mine.

There were no cars in McCarthy until the twenties. Then, the tin lizzies began chugging along the rutted dirt streets, coughing and wheezing. Four taxi firms sprang into business and I went to work for one of them--thoroughly enjoying the driving. In the winter, when the snow got so bad you couldn't drive, we mushed dog-team taxis--and again I was delightedly geeing and hawing in this enterprise. Our taxi service operated between McCarthy and the Kennecott bunkhouses.

Many times, in the winter I'd be dispatched to pleasure palaces with my dog team to pick up miners who had completed their fling and were now ready to return to their gruelling routine back at the mines.

I'd help a couple of them into the sled, wrap buffalo robes around them, and get the yelping team headed in the direction of the mine. I'd never ride the runners--the load was heavy enough with two passengers, each weighing at least 200 pounds, so I'd run all the way. As with the auto taxi, the trip cost \$5--I'd get \$2 and the owner \$3.

So, even before by teens, I was never broke and always had a good jingle in my pockets.

McCarthy was a real good place for a kid to grow up--there were all kinds of jobs for us to do--and the nickles, dimes, and dollars my two brothers and I made from all these jobs enabled us to purchase an airplane when we were still in our teens.

I chopped wood at \$5 a month for about half a dozen customers. I ran errands, did mechanical work in a garage, swept out stores--anything

# Bud

that had to be done. It didn't leave much time to play, but somehow I found time to ski, skate, fish, hunt and work on my cars and motor bikes.

McCarthy began to die in 1938. The mine closed. Businesses closed and people began to leave. Some people hung on, hoping the Guggenheims would reopen the mines--it never happened. About the same time, there was a strike on the railroad--and that, along with copper running as low as 8 cents a pound, killed McCarthy for good.

Most of the people didn't leave when the railroad shut down because they thought this was the company's bluff to the union during the bitter labor dispute. When they finally decided to leave, therefore, there was no suitable transportation for hauling their belongings.

For many years afterward, the houses, stores, hotels and other businesses remained fully-equipped as if they were still used from day to day--the only thing they lacked was customers.

Eventually, the buildings deteriorated, the contents were gradually hauled away or vandalized and many of the buildings literally toppled to the ground.

I left McCarthy in 1933 to work for Gillam Airlines at Copper Center, Cordova and Valdez. My two older brothers remained at McCarthy until the latter part of the 30s since they were working for gold mine operations in the area.

In 1936, I moved to Anchorage and my mother and brother, Fred, joined me there.

My brother, Eddie De Hart and I started and operated an aircraft repair shop at Merrill Field called the "Independent Repair Service."

I don't know if it was because we were too independent or if the airplane business was too poor, but our little business did not flourish, forcing us into other endeavors in order to survive. But that's another story. (To be continued.)

# McGrath

by Sally Jo Collins

The new McGrath Community School Committee includes two FAAers--myself and Maintenance Mechanic Dave Baker. Baker represented the committee at the Native Education Parents Council meet on bilingual-bicultural matters recently.

\* \* \* \*

The Arctic Knights basketball team won their first game of the season. Among those on the team who are FAA employee's dependents are Bert Vanborg, Joel Collins, Nathan Collins and David Baker.

\* \* \* \*

Welcome to McGrath to Matt Twitchell, formerly of Takotna. Matt is a meteorological technician for the National Weather Service and comes to McGrath by way of Oregon and Anchorage.

\* \* \* \*

Yes, we broke the temperature record for October 22 with a high of 54 degrees. Everybody was amazed at the absence of ice in the river during that warm spell. Maybe this year's weather is a repeat of last fall's.

\* \* \* \*

Bob Kountz, Carpenter, may not get around too well on his crutches, but he can still use his snowmobile! And Jackie Teague is finding out what a cast feels like this week (actually a splint).



# McGrath

It's a girl...AND a boy for Mr. and Mrs. Ed Onstott. Ed is a specialist at the McGrath FSS. The twins were welcomed into Ed and Mary Onstott's family in the early morning hours of November 6 at Tacoma General Hospital. Sarah Rosan weighed in at 2 lbs. 14 oz. and Jonathan Thomas at 3 lbs. 1 oz. Maternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Shaw of Hood River, Oregon, and paternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Tom Onstott of Sumner, Washington.

\* \* \* \*

McGrath FSS Specialist Harold Zarr has been elected as chief of the McGrath Volunteer Fire Department. Electronics Technician Dan Foger has been named Captain.

## When it Gets Cold as Blazes Smoke FREEZES!

(EDITOR'S NOTE--If anything further is needed to prove that Warren Runnerstrom can stack it as high as experts at stacking, the following recollection, penned during his CAA sojourn at Moses Point in the late 50's, ought to remove all doubt. Runnerstrom is now a card-carrying member of the nationally known Burlington, Iowa Liars Club. Another, hopefully more truthful, episode will appear in the next TRAPLINE.)

By Warren Runnerstrom

We've had a bit of "cool" weather here lately. In fact, a person might go as far as to say it's been downright cold. As a weather observer, I keep pretty good tab on the thermometer.

I've watched the mercury slip, then skid, and finally nosedive into the minus 40's.

Funny thing about all this is that we hardly notice the cold itself--it's the strange things the cold does that makes life interesting. Cold, dry air is conducive to generating static electricity. Remember how it used to be a great parlor gag to rub your feet on a rug and then touch your finger to somebody's ear? The static electricity discharge made 'em jump. This stuff makes us jump too. In the course of my duties in operations, I wiggle my seat about on the chair and build up quite a load of electricity. The instant I touch a radio set or a teletype machine, I get a jolt that, if I had hair, would make it stand on end.

Dagmar and our dog, Koko, get their share of these shocks too. When the two of them bring my supper down to operations, Koko always comes to me, tail wagging, for a pat on the head. When I touch the old fellow--whammy! Both of us are rocked back on our heels. Static electricity! Needless to say, this is making me unpopular with Koko, who figures my pats on the head pack too much punch to be delivered with good intentions.

Sometimes, when supper has been very good, I give Dagmar a kiss before she goes back to the apartment. Some of these kisses, sparking like crossed wires, could easily put Hollywood's hottest lovers into the amateur class. Our station electronics man, Harold Gillmer, claims one of these discharges could contain several thousand volts.

Getting back to the wonders of cold: I walked outdoors the other evening to take a weather observation. It was 43 below. As I looked into the instrument box, I took my cigar out of my mouth since the cigar's heat could effect the sensitive instruments. A minute or 2 later, the observation completed, I put the cigar back into my mouth. It tasted like a tobacco-flavored popsicle; the wet end had frozen solid.

The other day, glancing toward the housing area, I was intrigued by the

# Smoke

smoke curling lazily out of the chimneys. The temperature had been dropping rapidly into the low 30's and I wondered about the amount of fuel being burned. As I watched the smoke leave the chimneys, I became conscious of the fact it was doing so at a gradually slowing pace. Then, before my very eyes, the smoke oozed almost to a stop, looking very much like frozen milk pushing its way, cap and all, out of a milk bottle.

Fascinated, I missed a weather broadcast while watching smoke build into a frozen column about 6 feet high. At this point, the white column broke off and fell clattering down the roof to the ground. The tremendous crash on the roof brought everyone out of the house to see what had happened. This resulted in real danger since, while they were examining the first chunk of frozen smoke, a second piece fell, narrowly missing the curious people.

Station Manager Doug McDonald was concerned because, as he put it, in addition to snow removal problems, great logs of frozen smoke had to be cleared from the camp area. Doug organized "smoke log removal" teams. Everyone took his turn at this onerous job. In 3 days we collected an estimated 20 cords of frozen smoke.

But it all turned out to be a blessing in disguise. One of our problems with our two-seater "outhouse", that we converted into a fish smokehouse last spring, was gathering enough firewood to keep the smokehouse smoking. That problem is now solved. We're now stacking frozen smoke by the smokehouse.

Next spring, when the salmon are running, that smoke will begin melting. Instead of burning wood in the smokehouse, we'll just toss in a chunk of frozen smoke and let it melt under the curing fish. The result will be nicely smoked salmon.

That, in the Northland, is what's called "using the noodle."

# Yakutat

By Michael A. Tarr

The slowdown is upon us here at Yakutat. Now that the commercial fishing season and fish haul activity are over all that is left is hunting.

Rumor has it that the big oil companies will begin in earnest to drill for oil they know is out there. Most likely time for this to occur seems to be in February.

An expected heavy jump in flight activity can be anticipated.

\* \* \* \*

The anxiously-awaited Tarr young one arrived Sept. 19. An eight-pound boy with light brown hair and, so far, a mild disposition.

# Country Songfest

Up to a few more lines from country songs? Ready or not, here they come.

In the romantic category, how about "I don't mind getting burned if I can just be near the glow" on the upbeat and, for the downbeat, "put her out of my misery."

For rustic philosophy, we offer "when I'm alone, I'm in bad company" and "I don't know whether to kill myself or go bowling."

The cowboy macho category belongs to this one: "Don't cry down my back, baby. You might rust my spurs."

For clockwatchers, we have two selections: "just in time to be too late" and "forever, for us, wasn't nearly as long as we planned."

We also have a few country laments: "When she's got me where she wants me, she don't want me," and "how can whiskey six years old whip a man that's 32?" and "you rubbed it in all wrong."

Finally, the Dr. Spock Memorial prize goes to this song: "I turned out to be the only hell my mama ever raised."