

100-year anniversary of New York to Nome air expedition *Wrangell first Alaskan stop on historic flight*

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

About this time a century ago, eight members of the U.S. Army Air Service reached an important milestone of a long journey. Using DH-4 biplanes, used as bombers during World War I, several members of Black Wolf Squadron were attempting something never done before: To fly from New York City to Nome, Alaska. Their planes were among the first ever seen in Alaskan skies. The entire trip, there and back, was 9,000 miles and 112 hours of flying. On their way, this week 100 years ago, the city of Wrangell was their first stop made within Alaska.

The Nolan Center is hosting a new museum exhibit on the New York to Nome expedition. Among the items available to see in the museum include photographs of the pilots, a map of the route they took, and a propeller from one of the planes that made the journey.

According to a 1922 article in National Geographic, written by flight commander Captain St. Clair Streett, their planes were equipped with 400-horsepower motors capable of speeds of 115 miles an hour. A 2009 article in Air & Space Magazine by Tony Reichardt reports that the expedition was thought up by General William "Billy" Mitchell, as a means to show off the power and reach of his airplanes.

The whole expedition was made up of eight members of



PHOTO BY COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS, ALASKA POLAR REGIONS COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES, BLACK WOLF SQUADRON PHOTOGRAPHS

The officers of Black Wolf Squadron involved in the New York to Nome expedition (left to right): Capt. St. Clair Streett, First Lt. Clifford C. Nutt, Second Lt. Eric C. Nelson, Second Lt. C. H. Crumrine, and Second Lt. Ross C. Kirkpatrick.

the Black Wolf Squadron. Capt. Streett, Sgt. Edmund Henriques, Lt. Clifford C. Nutt, Lt. Erik H. Nelson, Lt. C. E. Crumrine, Sgt. James D. Long, Lt. Ross C. Kirkpatrick, and Master Sgt. Joseph E. English were divided up amongst four planes. They took off from Mitchel Field, New York, on July 15, 1920, "Precisely thirty-three minutes after the noon hour ..."

"A spirit of romance and adventure dominated the individual pilots who participated with me in that flight; but beyond the strict military reason which occasioned this expedition, a more fundamental purpose existed in the minds of the aviators," Streett wrote in his National Geographic article. "Put into words, it was this: 'Yesterday a month was required to reach the Yukon; if our expedition succeeds, it will prove that the Yukon is but three days distant by airplane!'"

Their flight took them over New York, The Great Lakes, and the Great Plains. They then flew over Canadian territory before finally reaching Alaska. Along the journey they had to contend with the elements, a lack of landing fields, as well as the constant worry of being forced to land in remote areas far from assistance, according to the Air & Space Magazine article. After several weeks of flying, Wrangell was their first landing in Alaskan territory, on Aug. 14, 1920.

They actually landed just north of Wrangell on Sergief Island, according to Streett. It turned out to be "one of the most curious experiences of the trip."



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Part of the Nolan Center's new exhibit on the air expedition from New York to Nome.

Despite appearing to be a good landing spot from the air, the field on Sergief Island was not as dry as they might have hoped.

"What looked like a quantity of sand flew up before his [Kirkpatrick's] wheels when they touched the ground," he wrote. "Descending in our turns, we found that in reality we were landing in a bed of salt marsh grass immersed in over a foot of water in places ... Our hosts had neglected to mention these circumstances, which is just as well, because this field was the only available site in that section, and landing in that amount of water is more disconcerting than

dangerous."

Stan Cohen, in his book *The Alaska Flying Expedition*, wrote that the pilots were drenched from their landing. Richard Suratt of the Fox News Agency was in Wrangell to take films of the planes coming in to land. These may be some of the first aviation movies taken in Alaska, he wrote. Cohen also added that Wrangell's mayor, J.G. Grant, was at the landing site to greet the pilots. J.W. Pritchett, editor of the Wrangell Sentinel back then, was given a copy of the New York Times by Streett. Territorial Governor Thomas Riggs and Juneau Mayor R. E. Robertson

sent cables to Wrangell congratulating the pilots on reaching Alaska, too.

According to an Aug. 19, 1920 article in the Wrangell Sentinel's archives, the town was deserted from all the people going to Sergief Island to meet the pilots. Mayor Grant had declared the day a holiday. Boatloads of curious onlookers made the journey from Wrangell to Sergief to watch the planes come in, which occurred shortly after 4 p.m. that day.

"After landing, the aviators lost no time in getting to work on their planes, oiling them and

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PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/
WRANGELL SENTINEL

A propeller from one of the planes in the 1920 New York to Nome expedition, on display at the Nolan Center.

Air expedition

Continued from page 1

replenishing the supply of gasoline," the article reads. "It was after dark before the flyers tied their machines down and left them for the night. Arriving in Wrangell the aviators found a dinner awaiting them at the hotel."

The expedition remained in Wrangell for two days because of bad weather, according to the Sentinel article. The planes took off for the next leg of the journey on Aug. 16. Streett said his plane was delayed because his pro-

peller broke while starting up the engine, and had to be repaired. The repairs were made quickly, and he took off without incident the next day.

"At 8:50 Captain Streett made a beautiful take-off, getting away without the slightest difficulty," the 1920 Sentinel article reads. "Before noon word came over that Captain Streett had passed over Juneau at 10:30, flying at a considerable height."

The Black Wolf Squadron reached Nome on August 23, 1920, according to Cohen's

book. Streett wrote that the entire journey so far had taken 53 hours and 30 minutes of flight time, over a distance of 4,500 miles. He also added that it would only have been another "short flight" of 150 miles to reach the continent of Asia, but that was not part of their expedition. After a few days of rest in Nome, they flew back for New York.

"On October 20 we landed safely on Mitchel Field, New York, completed the round trip of 9,000 miles in just 112 hours of flying, with the same airplanes, the same motors, and the same spark-plugs," Streett wrote. "Someday this trip may be made overnight - who knows?"

The Alaska Aviation Museum, in Anchorage, also has a brand new exhibit on the Black Wolf Squadron, according to



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

A map of Black Wolf Squadron's journey from New York to Nome, Alaska. The map is part of the Nolan Center's exhibit on the expedition.

Genevieve Corona of the museum. Several photographs of the expedition can be found online in Alaska's Digital Archives, as well, at www.vilda.alaska.edu.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

The Sentinel extends its best wishes to the persons listed on the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce Community Scholarship Birthday Calendar.

Thursday, August 13: Erik Keene Kohrt, Chris Byford, Kyle Hommel, Rachel Harris, Sean Kaer, Shawna Strain, Heidi Villarma. **Friday, August 14:** Alice Bakke. **Saturday, August 15:** Mikel Smith, Rebekah Gile, Chris Guggenbickler. **Anniversary:** Sanoë & Kaelene Harrison. **Sunday, August 16:** Jenni Jackson, Cooper Seimears, Diane O'Brien, Ken Smith, Mike Rugo, Margaret Villarma, Sabre Neyman. **Anniversary:** Ed & Gail Rilatos, Bryant & Joan Benjamin, Keith & Kathy Appleman. **Monday, August 17:** "Moose", Emily McCloskey. **Anniversary:** Grover & Dawn Mathis, Derek & Adrienne Angerman. **Tuesday, August 18:** Darren Newman, Juli Gillen, Carley Campbell, Haley Waddington, Rob McChargue, Rowan Wiederspoehn. **Anniversary:** Frank & Cherie Young. **Wednesday, August 19:** Ethel Lane, Kailani Gustafson, Heather Vergilio, Mitch Turner, Dave Hought, Abigail Comstock, Marc Simpson. **Anniversary:** Greg & Tami Meissner. **Thursday, August 20:** Cameron Jamieson, Leland Hegelson, Michael Szczałko, Brayden Wilsie, Dan DeBoer, Peter Helgeson, Charles Petticrew, Cherrith Young, Mary Lou Churchill, Steve Chrisman.

If you would like to add a birthday or anniversary at no charge please call the Sentinel at 874-2301.

Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

Friday, August 14

Fiesta Pork Chops, Cauliflower, Waldorf Salad & Biscuit

Monday, August 17

Salmon Burger, Oven Fried Potatoes, Honey Mustard Slaw

Tuesday, August 18

Cinnamon Chicken, Green Beans, Peach Salad and Pasta.

Wednesday, August 19

Pork Chops with Apple, Sweet Potatoes, Cauliflower Toss and Stuffing

Thursday, August 20

Rock Fish Chowder, Salad and Biscuit

Please call Wrangell Senior Center at 874-2066 by 10 a.m. for delivery.

Senior van also available to transport seniors to medical appointments reasonable errands like collecting mail, getting prescriptions at pharmacies or other essential need items.

FERRY

Northbound

Sunday, August 16

Matanuska 06:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 23

Matanuska 4:45 p.m.

Sunday, August 30

Matanuska 6:45 p.m.

Sunday, September 6

Matanuska 4:15 p.m.

Southbound

Wednesday, August 19

Matanuska 07:15 a.m.

Wednesday, August 26

Matanuska 8:30 a.m.

Wednesday, September 2

Matanuska 7:00 a.m.

Wednesday, September 9

Matanuska 6:30 a.m.

Call 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or Toll Free 800-642-0066 for recorded information.

TIDES August 13 - August 20

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
August 13	09:21	10.8	09:11	13.7	02:33	3.3	02:22	5.7
August 14	10:32	11.5	10:13	14.4	03:47	2.6	03:37	5.7
August 15	11:29	12.4	11:07	15.4	04:52	1.4	04:46	5.2
August 16	12:16	13.5	11:56	16.4	05:44	0.1	05:41	4.3
August 17	12:58	14.6	06:27	-1.2	06:28	3.2
August 18	00:41	17.4	01:37	15.6	07:07	-2.2	07:11	2.1
August 19	01:24	18.0	02:14	16.4	07:45	-2.8	07:53	1.1
August 20	02:07	18.3	02:51	17.1	08:23	-2.9	08:35	0.4

August 12, 1920

Many people in the States seem to have in some way gotten the very erroneous impression that it does nothing but rain in Alaska during the summer. If our friends in the States would simply study the official weather reports for Alaska it would be a means of disabusing their minds of such utterly false ideas. The official records of Ed F. Grigwire, U.S. weather observer at Wrangell, for July, show so little moisture that one might think Wrangell was located in the Sahara desert instead of Alaska. Report for July Temperature; Mean Maximum: 71, Mean minimum: 49, Mean: 60, Maximum: 81, Minimum: 44. Precipitation total: 1 3/4 inches. Greatest in 24 hour: .81. Clear days: 23; partly cloudy: 3; cloudy: 5.

August 17, 1945

The War is over. Wrangell celebrated the surrender with appropriate joyousness and business houses closed that all might participate. Wrangell's men we hope soon will be coming home. We owe them a debt which can never be fully paid any more than can they recapture and relive again the months and years they took out of their lives to serve their town and their country. Those months and years were not pleasant. Probably they would rather have remained home to hunt and fish and play rather than submit to the regimented, rugged training which Uncle Sam found necessary to put them through. But they took it like men—and they will return,

not boys, but men.

August 13, 1970

Jamie Bryson, editor of the Sentinel, and P.C. McCormack, of the Wrangell Wharf and Etolin Transfer and Storage, returned to Wrangell Monday afternoon aboard a light aircraft they flew from San Diego. The plane, a 115-horsepower Champion Citabria, belongs to Bryson. He formerly used it for flight instructing purposes in Carlsbad, Calif., near San Diego. The 2,000-mile trip north took the Wrangell residents up the center of California and Oregon, through Seattle and British Columbia via the Fraser River, Prince George and Prince Rupert. Bryson, 35, and McCormack, 27, flew to San Diego by jet Wednesday and picked up the two-place, 100-mile-an-hour Citabria in Carlsbad Thursday morning. Overnight stops were made in Sutter Creek, Calif., Seattle,

Prince George and Terrace, B.C. A total of 30 flying hours was required to make the trip.

August 17, 1995

Since Wrangell's golf course is still a way from being ready to play through, supporters of the sport can practice their putter grip by grabbing hold of a fishing rod and competing in the first annual Wrangell Golf Club 50/50 Coho Derby. Beginning 8 a.m. Saturday and running through Labor Day weekend, the event offers three cash prizes, with amount depending on the number of anglers paying the \$20 entry fees. Largest fish will earn 50 percent of the prize money; second largest fish gets 30 percent and third largest fish wins 20 percent of the prize money. Wrangell Golf Club will receive 50 percent of all entry monies. Wrangell King Salmon Derby rules and boundaries apply.

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

Jury duty for August. You will be receiving notices in the mail in the next few weeks. Court number: (907) 874-2311.

Anyone doing business at the Wrangell Court are required to wear a mask unless under 2 years of age or exempted for medical reasons. This is effective until further notice. All hearings are being conducted telephonically until further notice. Contact the court for the call-in number at (907) 874-2311.

Monday, August 17

Regular School Board Meeting: 6:30 pm, via Zoom, <https://zoom.us/j/97668485778?pwd=UT-NrTm9qS2lk014MUo0QW1XdURUZz09>, Meeting ID: 976 6848 5778, Passcode: qin3gH

Saturday, August 22

Wrangell Emblem Club #87 Meeting at 1:00 pm, Upstairs at the Wrangell Elks Lodge #1595.

Continuing Events

AA Meetings: North Star Group Meeting Tuesdays and Fridays 7 - 8 p.m at St. Philips Episcopal Church.

The Way We Were In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
Aug. 4	61	56
Aug. 5	57	53
Aug. 6	59	52
Aug. 7	58	54
Aug. 8	57	53
Aug. 9	57	54
Aug. 10	56	50
Aug. 11	53	50

Daylight Hours

Date	5:15a	8:29p	15:14h
Aug. 13	5:15a	8:29p	15:14h
Aug. 14	5:17a	8:27p	15:10h
Aug. 15	5:19a	8:25p	15:06h
Aug. 16	5:21a	8:22p	15:01h
Aug. 17	5:23a	8:20p	14:57h
Aug. 18	5:25a	8:17p	14:52h
Aug. 19	5:27a	8:15p	14:48h
Aug. 20	5:29a	8:13p	14:44h

Church rescinds hiring of new pastor after backlash

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

Two weeks ago, it was announced that Hope Community Church of God would be hiring a new pastor, William Vorrasi. In a now-deleted post on the Wrangell community Facebook page, he introduced himself and family. His wife, Teresa, was born and raised in Wrangell and he said they were excited about the move. However, it came to light that Vorrasi is on the national sex offender registry. Backlash from the community has caused the church to take back its decision to hire him.

Vorrasi said that his wife had

recently made a trip to Wrangell to attend a funeral. While there, she heard that the Church of God was looking to hire a new pastor. Vorrasi said that he has experience in ministry, working in prison ministry and as a mentor with the department of correction, and is also pursuing an education as a pastor, among other ministry outlets. He said he discussed this potential job with both members of the church and the Wrangell Ministerial Association.

Vorrasi said in a phone interview with the Sentinel that the Church of God was aware he was on the sex offender registry



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Members of the Wrangell Fire Department responding to an alarm at the Wrangell Medical Center Wednesday morning, Aug. 5.

Fire alarm at Wrangell Medical Center

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

At approximately 10:35 a.m. last Wednesday, Aug. 5, the Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department was alerted to a fire alarm at the Wrangell Medical Center. Firefighters and EMS responded to the call within minutes, while hospital staff and patients waited outside. Upon investigation, it was determined

that there was no danger. The fire department was unable to determine what caused the fire alarm to go off, however.

"It could have been a procedure they were doing," said Chief Tim Bunes. "It doesn't appear that there was anything that created any heat or smoke from mechanical systems. Well, there was a reason, we just don't know what. Nothing burning, nothing damaged."

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prior to offering him the job. He said he liked to think his experience in ministry and examples of his work helped him get the job offer. He added that the church has had several other candidates in the past, but he did not wish to speak on behalf of the church.

According to the Idaho State Journal, in a July 5, 2015 article, Vorrasi was serving as a detention officer in Caribou County, Idaho. He was accused of having sexual encounters with a fe-

male prisoner. He was charged with four counts of sexual contact with an inmate, according to the article, and one count of destruction of evidence.

"The document claims that detention officer William Vorrasi began grooming the inmate in the fall of 2014 by offering her special privileges and favors," the article reads. "That action resulted in multiple sexual encounters, including oral sex and intercourse between the inmate and Vorrasi."

The jury found him guilty, Vorrasi said in an interview with the Wrangell Sentinel, and while in prison he said he was a

model inmate. According to the Idaho Department of Correction, Vorrasi was released to supervision on Sept. 10, 2018. The "Sentence Satisfaction Date" for his convictions is dated June 29, 2021.

While convicted, Vorrasi maintains his innocence. He was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, he said. He was offered several plea deals both before and during his sentence, he said, but never took any of them because he could not admit guilt to something he did not do. He has several character witnesses who can stand behind

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Start Stepping Southeast

A 29-Day Walking Challenge from SEARHC (August 3–31)

SEARHC invites Southeast Alaska residents to participate in Start Stepping Southeast, a walking challenge that is good for the body and the mind, and open to people of all ages and abilities. Participants who turn in a weekly steps log will be entered into a raffle to win weekly \$50 gift cards to local businesses or a Fitbit.

Please maintain 6 feet distance from non-household members and follow CDC social distancing and public health guidelines.

To sign up and access step trackers, visit searhc.org/startstepping or scan the QR code using your smartphone camera app.

Have questions?
Contact Heleena at heleenav@searhc.org
or Hannah at hshlosstein@searhc.org

SEARHC
healthy is here.

Police report

August 3

Theft
Citizen Assist: Lockout
Two Summons Services
Agency Assist: Traffic
Two Citizen Assists

August 4

Two Subpoena Services
Traffic Complaint
Deer Complaint

August 5

Agency Assist: Fire department
Agency Assist: TSA

August 6

Traffic stop citation issued to Mariyan Aleksiev, 37 for No Proof of Insurance. Verbal for no tail lights.

Animal Complaint
Agency Assist: TSA
Harassment

August 7

Disturbance
Intoxicated Person
Agency Assist: Hoonah PD

August 8

Parking
Traffic
Littering
Dog at Large

August 9

Agency Assist: OCS

During this reporting period there were three Welfare Checks and three EMS Calls.

Church

Continued from page 3

him, he said, and he also denies the veracity of the accusations that were made against him.

"At the end of the day, she's tried this three other times with other men," Vorrasi said. "I was off camera for five minutes and three seconds."

One such character witness was Dr. Thomas Sanderson. He emailed the Sentinel on Aug. 4 to vouch for Vorrasi's character. Sanderson said that Vorrasi and his family have been integral parts of their church community.

"William and his wife Teresa have been an integral part of the music and teaching at Grangeville Christian Church for the last two years we have been at the church," he wrote. "He has also filled in for other pastors in the area who needed someone to fill the pulpit in their absence ... He is very up front about his past. He is above board and has not let this incident deter him from his mission. I would highly recommend him for a pastoral position as William has had to go through some hard knocks in our culture and lived to come out strong."

Another character witness who reached out to the newspaper was David Zimmermann, pastor of Soda Springs Baptist Church. He also took Vorrasi's position that the accusations made against him were false, and also said that Vorrasi and his family have consistently shown "good character throughout the events of the past 5 years."

When Vorrasi's background came to light, several Wrangell residents objected to his hiring and his coming to Wrangell. In sharing their concerns, both through social media and with the church, the decision to hire Vorrasi was overturned. Hope Community Church of God released a statement on Facebook, Aug. 3.

"Hope Community Church of God will not be hiring William Vorrasi," the entirety of the statement reads.

Kem Haggard, with Harbor Light Assembly of God and chairperson of the Wrangell Ministerial Association, also took to social media to make a statement. The WMA does not participate in the hiring or firing process of the churches, he wrote. He also stated that a welcome on the organization's Facebook page does not "endorse a selection or ministry by all of the churches, pastors, or their members."

"I'm not upset," Vorrasi said about the decision, "God works all things to edify him."

Vorrasi said that he believes the backlash against his hiring was led by a particular Wrangell resident, though he did not share their name, that had also pursued a position at the church but was rejected. He also said that he was sad that people would rush to judgment before getting to know him, but was not angry. He also added that while he will not serve as pastor at Hope Community Church of God, he and his family still intend to move to Wrangell in the coming months.

Multiple attempts by the Sentinel to contact the Church of God for comment have been un-

successful. News Editor Caleb Vierkant received one message from the church's Facebook ac-

count, stating that the person who might answer the paper's questions is out of town.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

The M/V Chugach Ranger, resting in the boat yard under a tarp.

Relocation of Forest Service boat discussed in port commission workshop

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Port Commission met Thursday evening, Aug. 6, to discuss plans to relocate an old Forest Service vessel. The borough assembly adopted a memorandum with the Forest Service last November, regarding the *M/V Chugach Ranger*. According to a Nov. 14, 2019 article in the Sentinel, the ship was first constructed in 1925, and is one of the last wooden Forest Service ranger boats in existence. It currently resides in the boat yard. However, the plan is to move the boat over to the Nolan Center, where it will reside as an historical display.

The port commission spent the majority of their workshop discussing how to move the *Chugach Ranger*. Keeleigh Solverson, with the harbor department, said that the plan is to place the boat near the water-side of the Nolan Center, beside another boat already sitting there. She added that the original timeline for the project was to have the boat moved by the end of September.

One of the main problems with moving the boat is a lack of space for the travel lift, which will carry the boat, to maneuver into the right spot. Solverson said that most of the discussion in the workshop revolved around laying down some fill along the side of the boat yard, near the Nolan Center, to give the lift more space to operate.

As this was a work session, no formal action was taken by the port commission.

Death Notice

Darrel Gross passed away July 30 of cancer in Wrangell at SEARHC Medical Center. An obituary will follow.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The controversy rages on how to start school. Some schools are virtual learning only; some favor face-to-face as if things were normal, and some favor a combination of normal contact with masks and distancing. I favor the choice of virtual learning only with no face-to-face contact.

I lean that way for several reasons. Number one is I have not heard of any kid who died of lack of socialization but I have of Covid 19. Lack of normal contact does cause mental and physician issues with children, but no fatal ones. Kids' brains won't shrivel up and disappear because they miss another six months of regular school activity. Their whole education won't go up in smoke because they miss several months of regular school. Of far more importance is life or death. I would much rather have a healthy child at home than one who is sick or dead. Starting school is not worth the death of one child or teacher.

When it comes to teachers and normal physical contact with students, teachers are in more harm's way than kids. They are more likely to become ill or even dead from catching the disease. So let's protect our kids and our educators and wait until a vaccine comes out to protect us all.

Ron Merritt

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New hospital aiming for December move-in date

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Medical Center construction project remains on budget, according to an update from SEARHC. Rainy weather this summer has been a challenge, according to the update, but progress is still being made on the new hospital. The update also adds that the project is actually ahead of schedule. Owner move-in activities are set to begin around mid-December this year. Full project completion is expected in early 2021.

According to the update, interior metal framing is nearly complete. Drywall work has been completed in area 4 of the site, and mostly finished in areas 2 and 3. Outside of the building, exterior siding crews are working around the main entrance of the hospital and the connecting hallway between the hospital and the existing AICS Clinic. The update also reads that mechanical, plumbing, and electrical work is still ongoing, with progress



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEARHC

Workers leveling cement for the courtyard of the new hospital.

being made in several areas. Renovation of the AICS Clinic is ongoing, as well.

"The clinic renovation is going well with most of the interior framing completed in the outpatient pharmacy, reg-

istration area and upper level new office spaces," the update reads. "A section of the concrete slab in the registration area was cut and removed so that the new elevator pit and drain line could be

installed."

Upcoming activities for the project include installation of cabinets and countertops, building concrete sidewalks and drive through, and exterior painting.



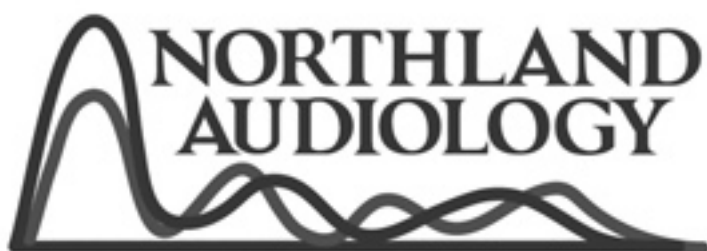
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District to decide on "high" or "medium" risk start to school year on Aug. 24

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

With a SMART Start plan in place, and a beginning to the year scheduled for Sept. 8, the Wrangell School District is now working to decide what risk level they should operate at for the upcoming school year. While the SMART Start plan on the district's website lists "medium risk" as the starting level for next year, a recent announcement by Superintendent Debbe Lancaster made the public aware this might not be the case.

"The district will determine whether the schools will open at a medium or high risk level on August 24," Lancaster's announcement reads, on the district website. "The decision will be based on many factors including the EOC community risk determination data. After the decision is made, a message will be posted on the district web site and sent via

email to all staff and families enrolled in Wrangell Public Schools."

According to the SMART Start plan, a set of guidelines for the district to try and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the schools, there is a significant difference between medium risk and high risk levels of operations.

In the secondary schools, the medium risk plan will have a regular school schedule from Monday to Thursday. Fridays will be half-days. There are other guidelines in place regarding social distancing, hand washing, face coverings, and other precautionary measures against COVID-19. A high risk level of operations, however, means that there will be no in-person instruction at all. All classes will be held online, similar to how the district handled the latter part of the previous school year.

At Evergreen Elementary school, the medium risk level of operations will have half of

instruction being conducted in the school itself. The other half will be done via distance learning. Again, there are guidelines in place for precautionary measures such as social distancing and hand washing. At high risk, like the secondary schools, there will be no in-class instruction.

"If we do start school with online instruction, we will probably do so for the entire 1st semester," Secondary School Assistant Principal/Lead Teacher Bob Davis wrote in an Aug. 11 newsletter. "After all of the confusion of last spring and this summer, our students need some consistency ... If we open with in-school classes, parents will still have the option to have their child take classes online. All of our in-class courses will have an online option. Students should be able to move easily and smoothly between the two options."

Comments and questions regarding the SMART Start plan can be sent to smartstart@wpsd.us. A copy of the plan, as well as the school calendar, can be found on the district's website at www.wpsd.us.



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Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH Fisheries columnist

Alaska communities hit hard by weak salmon returns

Unless you fished for salmon this summer at Bristol Bay, it's been slim pickings for fishermen in other Alaska regions. Salmon returns have been so poor that communities already are claiming fishery disasters.

Cordova's City Council last week unanimously passed a resolution asking the state to declare disasters for both the 2018 Copper River sockeye and Chinook salmon runs and the 2020 sockeye, chum and Chinook runs at the Copper River and Prince William Sound.

The resolution also urges the state and federal governments to declare a "condition of economic disaster in Cordova as a result," reported Seafood.com, adding, "The town of 2,500 is now the first of what will likely be at least one or two others to ask for a fisheries and economic disaster declaration in 2020."

The sockeye fishery at Chignik on the Alaskan Peninsula also has remained closed again this year. So few salmon have returned state managers said it is unlikely escapement goals will be achieved for the third consecutive year.

"It's looking like one of the worst years in Chignik history," Ross Renick, area manager for the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game told KDLG in Dillingham.

Salmon catches throughout Cook Inlet

are bleak again this year with a total take barely topping 2.7 million, mostly pinks. Only 748,000 sockeyes have come out of the Inlet so far this season.

Southeast Alaska communities also are being hit hard by weak returns; by Aug. 8 the total catch for the region had yet to reach six million salmon. For pinks, the catch was nearing 4 million out of an already low forecast of 12 million fish, one-third of the 10 year average of 35 million humpies.

For chums, the Southeast catch had yet to reach 1.5 million out of a projected take of 9 million fish.

Sluggish chum returns to the Yukon means summer fishing is likely over and ADF&G said no commercial openers are likely for this fall.

Low numbers also reduced fishing time at Norton Sound where only pinks have again shown up in strong numbers, but with no buying interest.

At Kotzebue, a total harvest could come in at under 200,000 chums for the first time since 2009.

Across the state, the peak for coho salmon production is still a few weeks but catches so far are skimpy compared to past years. A total catch of 4.2 million silver salmon is projected for the season.

There are a few notable mentions for

Alaska's 2020 salmon fishery.

For the first time since 2015 commercial fishing occurred in the Kuskokwim region.

Kodiak's pink salmon catch has been strong and steady, nearing 9 million.

Alaska sockeye catches have tracked nicely with preseason projections at over 44 million fish so far. More than 39 million of the reds came from Bristol Bay but fishermen are not happy.

A base price of 70 cents a pound is down 48% from last year and "has understandably created anger and confusion among fishermen," said the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association in a statement on market conditions.

In all, Alaska's statewide, all-species salmon catch for 2020 is projected at nearly 133 million fish.

Salmon facts: 95% of wild salmon eaten by Americans comes from Alaska, but Alaska salmon provides only about 13% of the global supply. Farmed salmon production outnumbers wild harvests by nearly 3 to 1.

Buy/Sell Better! Fishermen, registered buyers and hatcheries have a new and easier way to do business online from a single location—SeafoodAuction.net.

"Your existing buyers are part of this if they choose to be, and they're the ones that are bidding. It just makes everything easier," said Nate Berga of Kenai, the auction creator who has over 20 years' experience in both Alaska fishing and buying. "This is somewhat like eBay in that it's a platform for fishermen to go to advertise that I'm going fishing on this date for X amount of pounds of quota. And all the normal buyers that are around here can go to one spot to see what fishermen are going out, when, and how much. So existing companies that fishermen are used to selling to have the opportunity to bid through this platform."

The streamlined SeafoodAuction process, Berga added, is completely above board.

"Fishermen often wonder if they are getting the best price and did they call the right buyers. And from the buyer's side, no one necessarily knows what's going on or who's paying what. So this provides transparency in the marketplace," he explained.

The Seafood Auction also can streamline sales of hatchery cost recovery salmon, the fish sold to help fund their operations. Instead of soliciting bids from

Continued on page 7

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) will hold a Special Board Meeting on August 17, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. AKDT. Due to recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and its social distancing guidelines, the meeting will be held electronically. The purpose of the meeting is to consider award of a contract and enter into an executive session for an update on the negotiations of SEAPA's Submarine Cable Replacement Contract. For additional information, please call 907.228.2281.

Published: August 13, 2020



IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT AT WRANGELL

In the Matter of the Estate of:)
)
Johanna Marie Joseph,)
Person who Died (Decedent))
Date of Birth: 02/20/1945)CASE NO.1WR-20-00001PR

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

You are notified that the court appointed LeAnn M. Bryner as personal representative of this estate. All persons having claims against the person who died are required to present their claims within four (4) months after the date of the first publication of this notice or the claims will be forever barred.

Dated: 08/11/2020

LeAnn M. Bryner
PO Box 1641, Wrangell, AK 99929

Published: August 13, 20 and 27, 2020

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City & Borough of Wrangell
NOTICE INVITING BIDS TOUCHLESS BATHROOM ACCESSORIES

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska will receive sealed bids for the construction of the Touchless Bathroom Accessories project in the office of the Borough Clerk until 3:00 PM prevailing time on August 19, 2020. The full solicitation package may be obtained at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, and it may also be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell's website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFP section.

City and Borough of Wrangell
Lisa Von Bargaen, Borough Manager
Publish: July 30, August 6, and 13, 2020

City & Borough of Wrangell
NOTICE INVITING BIDS TOUCHLESS PLUMBING FIXTURES

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska will receive sealed bids for the construction of the Touchless Plumbing Fixtures project in the office of the Borough Clerk until 2:30 PM prevailing time on August 19, 2020. The full solicitation package may be obtained at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, and it may also be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell's website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFP section.

City and Borough of Wrangell
Lisa Von Bargaen, Borough Manager
Publish: July 30, August 6, and 13, 2020

City & Borough of Wrangell
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska will accept proposals for engineering design services for the **Water Mains Replacement** project in the office of the Borough Clerk until **2:00 PM prevailing time on August 27, 2020**. The full RFQ solicitation documents may be obtained at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929 and may also be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell's website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFP's section.

City and Borough of Wrangell
Lisa Von Bargaen, Borough Manager
Publish: July 30, August 6, 13 and 20, 2020

City & Borough of Wrangell
NOTICE INVITING BIDS RECREATION CENTER HOT WATER TANK REPLACEMENT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska will receive sealed bids for the construction of the Recreation Center Hot Water Tank Replacement project in the office of the Borough Clerk until 2:00 PM prevailing time on August 19, 2020. The full solicitation package may be obtained at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, and it may also be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell's website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFP section.

City and Borough of Wrangell
Lisa Von Bargaen, Borough Manager
Publish: July 30, August 6, and 13, 2020

More progress made on Mariners' Memorial construction

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

Work continues on the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial, a project to honor the memory of Wrangell seafarers who have lost their lives. As previously reported in the last construction update, the roof of the memorial's gazebo was recently installed. Jenn Miller-Yancey, with the Mariners' Memorial Board, said that more progress has recently been made. Some recent advancements in the project, she wrote in an email to the Sentinel, were made to help honor the memory of two local fishermen.

Siguard and Helen Decker, 21-years-old and 19-years-old, were two of four people who passed away in a car accident at the end of July. When the news broke, Miller-Yancey wrote in an email, the memorial's lighthouse was lit up in their memory. The light will stay on permanently, she said, adding that the Decker family has been instrumental in the mariners' memorial project. She also extended her thanks to Wrangell resident Clay Hammer for rigging up the light.

Another big step forward in the proj-

ect, she added, was the placement of an 800-pound compass rose in the center of the lighthouse pavilion.

"This job took many, many strong backs," she wrote. "Young fisherman [sic] of our community and their friends, all close to Sig and Helen Decker, were asked to assist with this task. There is a video available of this ceremonial placing of the compass rose on the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial Facebook page. It was a very moving event and we appreciate all of the young adults that came out to help with this and then followed by finishing off prepping the site. They all worked so well together that the compass rose was placed correctly the very first time down."

A celebration of life was held for Sig and Helen Decker at the memorial on Aug. 1. Miller-Yancey wrote that the Decker family has requested that part of a GoFundMe account set up in honor of Sig and Helen be donated to the memorial project. This is a very generous and thoughtful donation, she said, and will help install the memorial walls and continue work on the grounds. The board is also working to finalize plans to take ap-



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

The Wrangell Mariners' Memorial gazebo, decorated for the Celebration of Life of Siguard and Helen Decker on Aug. 1.

plications for memorial plaques, she added.

"We appreciate all of the hands that came together to help make the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial site usable in a very

short time duration, and are equally appreciative of this very giving and supportive community," she wrote. "The love Wrangell has for its own is like no other."

Alaska behind in 2020 United States Census response

By BRIAN VARELA
Sentinel writer

Alaska is ranked last among the 50 states in its response to the 2020 United States Census, as of Tuesday, Aug. 11. Only Puerto Rico is behind Alaska in its response to the census, according to Jeanette Duran Pacheco, media specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau regional office in Los Angeles.

According to data from the United States Census Bureau, as of Tuesday, 50.1 percent of Alaskans have completed the 2020 Census. Petersburg residents are aligned with the state's participation rate, with 50.4 percent of local residents having re-

sponded to the census. The participation rate in Wrangell is below the statewide percentage at just 38.4 percent.

Alaska receives about \$3.2 to \$3.8 billion per year in census driven federal programs, according to Pacheco. A one percent undercount of Alaska's population results in a loss of \$250 million in over ten years, said Pacheco.

"Participating in the Census means you are claiming your community's fair share of federal funding," said Pacheco in an email to the Sentinel.

Each name that the census registers translates to about \$40,000 in federal funding for

the individual's community, according to Rain Coast Data, a Southeast Alaska research firm.

A 2019 report written by Professor Andrew Reamer, of George Washington University, found that Alaska collected nearly \$3.2 billion in the 2016 fiscal year from 55 different federal programs. The federal government relied on data from the 2010 census to determine that amount, according to the report. About \$1.2 billion, the largest portion of the funding, went towards Medicaid. Federal funding also went towards school lunch programs, business and industry loans, crime victim assistance, childcare and develop-

ment, career training and low income housing.

As of Tuesday, 98 million households, about 63 percent of all households in the nation, have responded to the 2020 Census, said Pacheco. The deadline

to respond to the census is Sept. 30. Residents can respond online at my2020census.gov, by mail or by phone at 844-330-2020.

"Don't wait for a census taker to knock on your door," said Pacheco.

Fish Factor

Continued from page 6

various buyers, all transactions can be done online.

"Hatcheries maintain control in that they approve who can participate in the auction," Berga said. "If there's been anyone who they've had issues with, they may opt to not let somebody participate for whatever reason. It gives control to the hatchery to decide who is qualified to bid. Once that's established, those companies can go ahead and bid in the normal auction format where the highest bidder wins."

With all of the marketing chaos cause by the Covid pandemic, Berga said streamlined buying and selling by auction provides a welcome break.

"Things are really uncertain right now," he said, "and this definitely gives them an option."

Sign up for free at SeafoodAuction.net

All Hands needed on survey - Alaska's most popular annual seafood marketing gathering is making plans to meet online in early November instead of in person. The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute's annual "All Hands on Deck" event brings a huge mix of industry and interested public together to "talk fish" - but Covid has corked the event for this year.

"Typically, this event is held over the course of several days in Anchorage where we can all get together in the same room and have these conversations. Obviously, with travel and large meetings continuing to be uncertain for the foreseeable future, we've had to make a decision with our board to move to a virtual platform for 2020," said Ashley Heimbigner, ASMI communications director.

The All Hands meeting provides a look back at the industry's economics and trends for the previous year, and a look ahead. ASMI, which is a public/private partnership between the state and industry, is guided by a wide range of committees that cover nearly every fish in the sea. Others provide expertise on domestic and international marketing programs, communications and technical support.

Heimbigner said ASMI is researching ways to make All Hands the best event possible and input from the public in a short survey can help. The status of reliable internet for remote participants also is critical information.

"What is the most important part of All Hands to you, what topics do you want to make sure we discuss and it's really important for us to know whether the majority of participants have access to reliable internet and can access video conferences to look at presentations online, or if most of them will be calling in and might not have access to the video aspect," she said.

One benefit, Heimbigner added, is that those who have been unable to attend All Hands in the past can join in, as all meetings are open to the public.

Survey feedback is welcomed through August 12. ASMI also is seeking committee members through September 30. Find links at the ASMI website and on Facebook.

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Assembly appointment, mask resolution, ferry authority covered in assembly meeting

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Borough Assembly met Tuesday evening, Aug. 11. During this meeting, they appointed Bob Dalrymple to fill a vacant seat on the assembly. A seat was left empty after the resignation of Mya DeLong in June. Dalrymple was the only one to submit a letter of interest in the term, which expires this October.

"I would like to be more involved in public service and I think my abilities and experience would complement the current Assembly," Dalrymple wrote in his letter of interest.

During their meeting, the assembly also presented a certificate of service to DeLong, for her service on the assembly from October of 2018 to this June.

The assembly also adopted a resolution encouraging the public to wear face masks. Previously, the assembly had discussed the option of mandating the public to wear masks, in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. They felt a mandate would be a step too far, however, and decided on a resolution that strongly encourages mask wearing.

"All individuals are encouraged to wear masks or cloth face coverings over their noses and mouths when they are indoors in public settings or communal spaces outside the

home," the resolution states.

This encouragement is extended to people out in public, workers, and their employers. The resolution goes on to say that mask wearing is not encouraged for young children, the speech impaired or hard of hearing, or those with breathing trouble, along with some other exceptions. This resolution is not a mandate, it reads, and is not enforceable. It states the borough's position that wearing a mask in public, during a pandemic, is a good idea.

While the resolution was passed by the assembly, it was not popular amongst all listening members of the public. During the persons to be heard portion of the meeting, Wrangell resident Dale Parkinson called it political grandstanding.

The assembly also voted to hold a referendum regarding Wrangell's withdrawal from the Inter-island Ferry Authority. According to the meeting's agenda packet, the city participated in the creation of the IFA in 1997. Other participating municipalities included Craig, Coffman Cove, Hydaburg, Petersburg, and others. The purpose of the IFA, the packet reads, was to develop a network of ferries and ferry-related facilities that could service the areas of Prince of Wales Island, Ketchikan, Wrangell, and Petersburg.

New reporter for local radio station

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

After June Leffler left KSTK to move back down south last month, the local radio station has operated without a reporter. Leffler's replacement, Sage Smiley, arrived in town last Sunday.

"I'm really excited to be here," she said. "I think that Southeast is a beautiful place, and that Wrangell seems like a really wonderful and close knit community. I'm excited to be a part of it and get to report, do what I love here."

Smiley got her start in radio in Utah. She said she has worked in a variety of positions in her career, starting when she was 19-years-old. Some of her jobs have included working as a production assistant, making radio dramas, producing daily news shows, among other projects.

She came to Alaska, initially, to see family. Smiley said her aunt and uncle live in Bethel, and she came up to visit them one winter, and to volunteer at the K300 dog sled race. While there, she said she met some people with radio station KDLG. After that initial meeting, she said she learned about the fisheries report and decided to take a job in Alaska.

"So then I applied to the fisheries report and got that job, and then got it again this past



Sage Smiley

year," Smiley said. "I wanted to stay in Alaska. I think Alaska's a very unique place, especially in terms of what radio means to communities."

Her most recent job was with KDLG, she said, but that was only seasonal. She wanted to keep working in Alaska, and found a more permanent position with KSTK. She has only been in town for a little over a week, and said that she has spent most of her time getting settled. She added that she is excited to start getting to know people, start attending community meetings, and start reporting.

"This ordinance is being brought to the Assembly for consideration because Wrangell has not benefited from the IFA services since 2008," the agenda packet reads. "Also, as a requirement of being a participating member of the IFA, Wrangell has had either one public community member or assembly member on the IFA Board. Since Wrangell is not receiving benefits (as members of the IFA) we are requesting the approval of this Ordinance, to withdraw from the IFA."

With the ordinance being approved by the assembly, the question of withdrawing from the IFA will be added to the upcoming October election for

local voters to consider.

Other items covered in this meeting include a discussion regarding an application to the EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessment Program, a professional services agreement with AMC Engineers for an assessment of the Wrangell Public Safety Building, and an amendment to the FY 2021 budget to transfer \$9,605 from the general fund reserves to the public safety building assessment project. The assembly voted to postpone acceptance of the FY 2019 audit, to wait for auditors to call into a future meeting to answer questions. They also postponed a vote on a resolution amending the job description of the facili-

ties maintenance specialist.

They also approved a motion to negotiate a sale of a portion of Lot 11, Block 83, USS 1119 with Jim and Sue Nelson. Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga also reported, during the meeting, that St. Frances Animal Rescue would be closing in the near future. They have reached out to the borough regarding animal control, she said, to make sure the city does not face a feral cat problem in the near future.

Prior to their meeting, the assembly also held a work session regarding the Institute Property. A writeup of this workshop will be in next week's edition of the Wrangell Sentinel.

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