



Valley Press/Michael Bowen

Patriots celebrate with flag burning

by Michael Bowen

A group in Palmer will celebrate Flag Day tomorrow by burning the American flag.

No, these people are not radicals relishing the sight of Old Glory in flames. Rather, they are the American Legion Post 15 performing their honorable duty of disposing unserviceable flags.

The flag burning ceremony, which is open to the public, will begin at 8 p.m. on Friday, June 14, in the front parking lot of the Palmer Tourist Information Center.

Palmer Post 15, under the direction of Commander Donald Robertson, is reportedly the only American Legion post in Alaska that performs such a service.

According to legionnaire Bob Maloney, 87 torn and ragged flags are scheduled for burning.

"These flags are brought from all parts of Alaska. Two flags were even sent up from Trenton, New Jersey," Maloney said.

After the flags are inspected by three different stations, they are brought to a burning rack where they are doused with diesel fuel and set aflame. Only seven flags will be burned for public observance. The other 80 will be treated similarly in a private ceremony.

As a prelude to the burning, the Air National Guard from Kulis Air Force Base will present a special ceremony called the "Avenue of Flags." All the flags ever flown over the United States will be displayed, with a brief dissertation given for each. Senior Master Sergeant, Jayne Shorie, will serve as the director and narrator.

"The whole ceremony is quite impressive. I think the public will enjoy it," said Maloney.

The American Legion, an organization for the mutual benefit of veterans and their dependents, promotes patriotism and community service. There are 2.7 million members in approximately 16,000 Legion Posts nationwide.

Lawmaker to consider constitutional amendment

Editors Note: This is the third installment of stories based on interviews with legislators who represent the Mat-Su Valley. This week State Rep. Katie Hurley of Wasilla comments on the controversial pay raise for lawmakers.

by Ray Tyson

State Rep. Katie Hurley, D-Wasilla, chairman of the House State Affairs Committee, said this week her committee this summer will look at formulating a constitutional amendment to establish an independent salary commission that would set pay scales for the governor, lawmakers and top bureaucrats.

Hurley also said she may continue pushing her bill next session to repeal the controversial \$46,000 per year pay raise for legislators, which narrowly failed to pass the House last session 21-19.

Hurley's pay raise repeal bill remains in the House Judiciary Committee, where it will either sink or swim next session. If the Alaska Legislature again turns up its nose at the pay raise issue, then voters will have the final say in the November, 1986, general election.

Lawmakers generally work hard during the four months they are in Juneau, Hurley said, but the work they put in during the remaining eight months of the year doesn't justify their annual salary.

However, there may be a motive behind lawmakers' reluctance to kill their own pay increase, Hurley said.

"I believe it has something to do with retirement," she said. "Retirement for a legislator is based on (his) three highest (pay) years. Everyone who qualifies wants to get in their three years" before the issue goes to a vote of the people, or the Legislature repeals the raise.

But Hurley said lawmakers may be more willing to repeal



Katie Hurley

their pay increase next session, in order to avoid it becoming a campaign issue in the upcoming election season.

The long-term solution to the pay issue, she said, may lie in an amendment to the state constitution to establish a salary commission, similar to one adopted by the municipality of Anchorage several years ago.

Although Hurley said "I don't like to meddle in the constitution," she added that it may be the only way to remove salaries from the political arena.

Much of her work this summer, she said, will be conducting research into the possibility of drafting a constitutional amendment that could be placed on the ballot in the future.

In addition to the pay issue, Hurley last session was actively involved in legislation addressing the Longevity Bonus Program, beefing up the Alaska Permanent Fund, liquor licensing, the Older Alaskans Commission, games of chance and campaign ethics.

And like many of her fellow lawmakers, Hurley next session will be looking at ways to cut the state budget in the wake of dwindling state revenue.

Although some programs Alaskans have enjoyed over the years are likely to be axed by the

legislature next year, Hurley said cuts also can be made in lawmakers' personal expenses to help defray costs.

For example, she said, lawmaker's 10,000 pound shipping allowance from their home to Juneau and back again each session is too much. As a member of the Joint House-Senate Legislative Council, Hurley was unsuccessful in changing that policy last session.

"But it seems to me some money can be saved here," she said.

She also said the legislature will have to take a hard look at the way it distributes money throughout the state. While rural school districts end up with huge surpluses of money some years, more populated areas struggle to make ends meet.

But Hurley does not want to see further cuts in funds that support the Legislative Information Office (LIO) network in Alaska. She said the LIO system is one of the few ways citizens can keep up to date on what is happening in far away Juneau.

As a whole, Hurley said the Mat-Su Valley fared well this year, with most of its priorities financed by the state.

"We did a lot better this year," she said. "Cooperation was very evident."

Colonists return to good old days

by Mike Raven

"This has been a great reunion — truly sensational," said Colony Days committee Chairman Louis Odsather, who was already living in Anchorage when the 1935 Matanuska Colony was formed. Odsather ran the commissary, which later became the trading post.

"I got to know each and every one of the colonists. I attended more open houses and barn parties than anyone else in the Valley and I've kept in close contact. There are about 30 or 40 of the original colonists here who moved Outside shortly after settling here in '35 and have not been back since."

Quite a few of the returning colonists were reunited for the first time in as many as 50 years at Friday's registration proceedings in the Irwin Building at the fairgrounds. "The chatter and the embraces were overwhelming," Odsather said.

It took seven months for the

committee to organize the Colony Days activities, he said adding that the weekend had been "very successful."

The daughter of colonists Neil and Margaret Miller, Janell Mickel and her husband, Eugene (Jiggs), returned to Palmer this weekend from Dubois, Wyo., for the first time in 35 years. "There are some people here I haven't seen for even longer than that, some of the fellows were in the service when I left."

Jiggs and Janell met when he was stationed here in the Air Force. The reunion weekend, he said, had been "fantastic. Everybody's just thrilled to death and I'm sure those that couldn't make it will be very disappointed."

Janell's sister, Priscilla Bacon, who still lives in Palmer, also attended the reunion. She went Outside to college and worked in Seward for a number

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Reunion — Many colonists who returned to Palmer last weekend had not seen each other for almost 50 years.