

2015-30

Images of Continuity, Images of Change slideshow

Jon M. Nielson, historian, script writer & narrator

Terrence MacTaggart, project director

Thomas Oates, photographer

Late 1970s

Fairbanks, Alaska

Project 44-78 University of Alaska, Dept. of Continuing Education. AHF 44-78. 8323.

Instrumental music

Narrator: The land, Alaska's physical grandeur and endless panorama seem to defy adequate description. In its appearance in its massive solidness it seems timeless and unchanging. And yet nature itself is the very essence of change. Defying the very continuity of shape and form. Nothing nature reminds us remains the same. In Alaska man's relationship with the land joins another factor in the process of natural change. The human need in part and often in conflict with nature to make use of the land, to mold and shape it into something which remains our ultimate source of wealth, security and freedom. In such a value system land cannot long remain neutral. How humankind, land and the process of change interact in Alaska varies tremendously in a relationship which itself constantly changes.

The quality and the priorities of life as they exist in scattered Native villages where luxuries are few and subsistence is both a tradition and a necessity is a world apart from the quality and priorities of life as they exist in Anchorage. Here 250,000 people crowd the shores of Cook Inlet wrapped in steel and glass when only sixty years before this urban phenomena rose from the tundra a scraggly log and tent construction camp of 3,000 littered the bluff. The specter of change facing individual Alaskan communities is every bit as great as that confronted by Alaska's larger urban centers. Whether a remote Athabascan community such as Arctic Village or a sprawling interior city like Fairbanks. To varying degrees the portent of change is perceived as both a promise and as a threat in communities where the perception of alternatives and consequences is often blurred by heated and bitter disputes. Decision making therefore quickly assumes adversary overtones. Many say that the argument rages between those who would protect the land in its pristine natural state and retard the process of change and those who would use the land, and the sea and their resources to build, to grow and to fuel the process of change. However between these two oversimplified and generalized extremes lie the many complex shades of compromise and common interest which for each Alaskan community forms a unique mosaic in its own image. This is Alaska's great dilemma and perhaps nowhere is this dilemma more clearly revealed than in four small communities: Nenana, Homer, Cordova and Wrangell. Communities where the necessity for change is being measured against the need to preserve the continuity of shared values and identities evolved through the continuum of Alaska's past. The question that faces us is whether Alaskans can have both change and continuity, on whose terms and at what cost. The question that

faces these four communities and many like them is how do we plan for an unpredictable future? Or can we plan at all?

The interior Tanana Valley community of Nenana lazily hugs the south bank of the Tanana River some fifty-five miles southwest of Fairbanks. Located on the largest tributary of the Yukon, Nenana is first and foremost a river town and for many of the community's five hundred residents the river provides necessities of life and the benefits of community. For Nenana the relationship has always been a vital one as long as people have lived there. Before white men settled on the Tanana Athabaskan Indians used this place as a seasonal home. The word Nenana means easy place to camp and a village existed here perhaps for centuries before a white trader named Jim Duke first opened a trading post and roadhouse in 1902. Gold brought thousands to the Tanana Valley, but in their haste to reach Chena and Fairbanks gold stampeder's rushed by Nenana on their way up the Tanana. However with the growth and development of the Interior the strategic location of Nenana quickly made it an important regional supply and transportation center. Until 1915 Nenana changed very little. It remained an Indian community with only a few resident whites. In 1903 an Episcopal mission was located here. St. Marks on the Tanana provided both spiritual guidance and humanitarian services for a people adjusting to white culture. Tragically man succumbed to disease such as influenza which decimated Indian residents. The decision in 1914 to build a railroad from the port of Seward to Fairbanks completely altered Nenana, transforming a serene riverfront village into a roaring boom town. Nenana suddenly found itself in the center of an interior transportation revolution. The quiet scraping of dog sled runners was joined by the clang of sledge hammers, the shouts of construction crews and the laying of rails. Nenana was on the map. By 1917 with the nation gearing up for war Nenana had grown large enough to send men off to the front. The railroad brought growth and growth brought new buildings, a main street, a telephone system and modern conveniences such as water and laundry service. In its setting the town is well planned and well laid out. Nenana incorporated as a first class city in 1921. In 1923 President Harding drove the golden spike to officially open the railroad linking Fairbanks with Anchorage. Nenana was no longer a railhead, but became a stopover. The foundations for her economy had been laid. With the end of railroad construction the familiar cycle of boom and bust cooled off Nenana's economy and the construction crews departed. Nenana survived as long as the Tanana River remained an important interior highway. The big sternwheelers pushed barges of supplies and freight and hauled passengers up and down the river. Nenana's docks were a swarm of activity during navigation season. In addition to livelihood the river provided entertainment and excitement in the spring when hundreds would line the banks to watch the ice go out opening the barge and riverboat season. Entertainment would occasionally turn to disaster with periodic flooding when the Tanana overflowed its banks and turned the streets into canals. The railroad and the river guaranteed Nenana's survival as a community which changed with the seasons. A busy interior port and commercial center for part of the year the town would slow the pace of deep winter when it was 60 below. Today Nenana remains true to its origins. There are those things which change with time – new buildings, more people – but the river, the docks and the railroad continue to add jobs and economic security. Another boom period occurred in the 1960s when construction of Clear Air Force Base twenty-three miles south of Nenana and completion of one of Alaska's major transportation arteries – the Parks Highway. In 1968 the highway bridge over the Tanana was completed and open to traffic. Nenana was now accessible by air, river, railroad and highway. The highway had an immediate impact on Nenana as the Tanana and the tri-valley area was open to thousands of motorists and the trucking industry. Another dimension was added to Nenana as it became a service community. Unlike many small communities Nenana is a diverse, individualistic and

relatively young town. It takes pride in the self-reliance based upon the labor of its seasonal work force. During the long summer days the sounds of heavy machinery and freight loading at the docks and the squeal of train brakes re-forged Nenana's link with the past. These links also bind the town to an Alaska in transition and may restrict community options with growth and development should the need for Nenana's services decline. Nenana may be at the crossroads of dramatic change and may find itself at the heart of a vast agricultural region. To the northwest of Nenana lies 500,000 acres of potentially rich farmland if developed could increase Nenana's importance as a transportation and service center. As a consequence of oil and gas exploration and production from the North Slope and increased coal production from the Healy-Sultana area rail connections may one day link the Arctic coast with the Interior and Canada fulfilling a dream that goes back to territorial days. Such development would have far reaching, but uncertain impacts on a community of 500. Most residents look forward to such changes to provide a more stable economic base. They see Nenana as a community in search of security and they encourage directed balanced growth. The outlook is essentially opportunistic with community leaders urging maximum land use and development to provide the stimulus for settlement and growth. Nenana looks to its timber, its agricultural potential, and its central location to transportation arteries to ensure its future viability as a community. There appears to be a consensus among Nenana's residents – over forty percent being of Indian ancestry – that population growth and land based or industrial growth are the keys to their children's future. Native land claims, the antiquity withdrawals, d-2, and other federal and state land policy decisions are certain to greatly influence Nenana's success or failure in realizing what many view as its potential. Lacking the political or economic power to influence such Native legislation Nenana's residents are like other small communities somewhat at the mercy of decisions made by others however disturbing these realities may be. Nenana, Alaska is a small rural community born with the twentieth century and nourished on optimism. It looks toward the future with faith in progress recognizing and welcoming the inevitability of change. Yet vestiges of traditional subsistence lifeways exist side-by-side with all that western culture has brought to Alaska. These two warily confront one another as adversaries, but they also complement each other as different expressions of shared needs. This relationship as it characterizes Nenana conveys the image of adaptability and projects a vision for the future.

Homer, a small, but growing community of 2800 lies at the lower end of the Kenai Peninsula, some 120 air miles from Anchorage, its huge neighbor to the north. Located on the north shore of Kachemak Bay, Homer is accessible by sea and by road. The best way to appreciate the beauty of Homer's setting however is to fly in over the Kenai Moose Range and the rivers which empty in the Cook Inlet. Approaching the wide expanse of Kachemak Bay steep, lush green bluffs fall away to reveal a majestic panorama set against the backdrop of the snow covered Kenai Mountains. Homer Spit curves out into the Bay, a long sandy arch in a sea of blue and float planes set down on Beluga Lake, near one of Alaska's most magnificent ice-free deep water ports. Scenic and ascetic values have always been a major reason people have settled in Homer. Underlying these values were others which first brought explorers and immigrants north to Homer's beaches and high bluffs -- more tangible riches like gold and coal. The pioneers who came to Kachemak Bay, first Russians then British then Americans, many of whom were of Finnish descent, found the land sparsely settled by Tanida Indians, hunters and fishermen who thought of themselves as the people. During the early 1800s Russians explored the rich fur bearers and coal seams of Bluff Point but made no permanent settlement. By 1899 the Cook Inlet Coal Fuel Company was mining Homer's rich coal seams and had laid forty-two inch track from the Bluff Point Mines to the end of the spit. A little settlement grew here and had the first coal lamp street light system. The rush for gold

at the turn of the century turned Kachemak Bay into a scene of brief, but furious activity. Thus it was that a miner and by reputation a con man from Michigan by the name of Homer Pennock brought a group of prospectors to the bay organized as the Alaska Gold Company. Homer Pennock settled on the broad sand beach and called his town site, not immodestly, Homer on the Spit. It was 1896 and the ramshackle community soon grew to over 200 miners and camp followers. Gold proved elusive but Homer became a local supplier for the diggings at Sunrise, Hope and its neighboring town of Seldovia. When Homer and its docks were destroyed by fire in 1904 a new town sprang up on the shore overlooking the spit. Homesteads soon dotted the fertile tableland between the bluffs and the bay. And the mild climate and rich soil combined to make Homer a potentially bountiful agricultural community. In the early days there were no roads except for the beach itself and there was only infrequent communication with the outside world. Homer existed in peaceful semi isolation and its hardy residents subsisted on a basic diet of moose, potatoes and fish during the moderate winter months. While mining provided a subsistence source of income there was little incentive for residents to develop other resources. As one early settler recalled – at Homer the easiest way to make a living was not by farming, but by trapping, mining or fishing. The early arrivals left the rich ground lie fallow although they impressed visitors as being a people comfortably rural in attitude and outlook who have preserved that friendliness and sense of cooperation that is rural America at its best. As more settlers arrived the little community grew and physically expanded beyond Beluga and Lampert Lakes and up the bluffs where Skyline Drive now winds its way. Agriculture, fox and mink fur farming, and fishing came to dominate the local economy particularly during the years following government closure of the coal lands in Alaska. Old methods inevitably blended with the new, but Homer remained a tightly knit community which prided itself on self-help and hard labor. Early residents still look upon these times with fond memories, but they recall that they paid their dues with what they built and endured as both individuals and as a community. Homer was never really a boom town, but it survived out of stubbornness and a way of life which seemed clean and uncomplicated. Today much of that same spirit is still visible in Homer, especially its rural character. Crops are harvested and families work together to produce much of what they need. A major shift in the economy occurred in the late 1920s and 1930s when commercial fishing became Homer's mainstay. Not much gold was taken from the mines but Kachemak Bay and the Gulf of Alaska provided Homer with a bonanza from the sea. Fishing being easier and more profitable than farming it dominated Homer's economy with a seasonal influx of fishermen and processors. Homer grew steadily with a brief surge during the peak years of the herring fishery until overharvesting resulted in an economic downturn. Another resurgence occurred with the development of the Tanner, King and Dungeness crab, salmon and shrimp fisheries during the 1940s and 1950s. Slowly quaint old Homer was transformed into an important regional commercial center. In 1938 the Homer Civic League was able to fund modern dock facilities. WWII brought military contracts and inflated spending. The Homer Airfield was built in 1941. The population surged from 325 in 1940 to over 700 a decade later. Homer's future was dramatically changed with the completion of a rough road connecting the lower Kenai with Anchorage. This was the Sterling Highway which when paved in the 1960s initiated a tremendous influx of tourists and would be homesteaders. Many of them settled briefly and then left. Too many people one resident lamented come to our bit of paradise to live the good life only to have their savings vanish finding it a losing struggle to acquire enough cash they are forced to leave their shattered dreams scattered along our shore and hillsides. Today Homer's new small boat harbor and impressive fish processing plants located in the spit's industrial area suggest the health of the industry and the stability of the local economy. Little remains of the original spit which was all but destroyed by the 1964

earthquake. The once sparsely developed area was rebuilt and now is frequently jammed with campers and motorhomes suggesting both the benefits and the drawbacks of every increasing numbers of tourists and Anchorage weekenders. Many residents decry what they see as the loss of Homer's old small town character and feel that the pace of quality and change has gotten out of hand. Perhaps half of Homer in the words of one resident would have slammed the gate years ago. Many are now resigned to the inevitability of change and unfamiliar or threatening economic and social values. Not long ago a comprehensive development plan was put together by Homer residents, city council and an advisory planning commission in an effort to anticipate and direct these changes. The goal of the master plan was to provide for the planned and orderly growth within the city, protect the city's beauty and resources while not denying the residents or outside land holders the reasonable use of their land and to preserve a stable economic base for its citizens. Recently more often the community finds itself deeply divided on how best to achieve these ideals while avoiding the pitfalls. How to balance social and physical environmental values against the need to maintain an expanding economy and to meet the demand for more services. Beyond the larger sharply controversial issues such as impending outer continental shelf leasing, tourism and the first real commitments to a bottom-fishing industry there are purely local problems in planning and zoning, industrialization of the spit and the expansion of city services to nearby Kachemak City. How will Homer meet the need for expanding services and higher city revenues and still maintain residential land values and aesthetic qualities distinctive of the Homer setting? How will Homer attract the needed state, federal and private capital and corporate investment without inviting urban sprawl and the domination of local affairs by outside interests? How will Homer reconcile the human need for beauty and solitude with the community need of ultimately having to pay for them in a northern setting where all too frequently individual human values and collective social priorities have become antagonists. Homer like other small Alaskan communities must come to terms with these conflicting needs while time permits participation in their resolution.

Cordova is a picturesque community of 3,000 nestled on the southeast shore of Orca Inlet near the eastern entrance of Prince William Sound. Cordova's setting is a rare blend of misty seascape, craggy coastal peaks, and massive glaciers. In a word, Cordova is breathtaking. Long before Captain James Cook sailed into Snug Corner Cove in 1778 the Eyak and Tlingit Indians of the Copper River Delta camped, hunted and fished in peaceful isolation where Cordova now stands. Although salmon canneries operated as early as 1899 it was not fish or game or scenic beauty which first drew whites to Orca Inlet it was coal, oil and copper and the promise of fortunes to be made. Alaska's first oil well came in at Katalla just south of Cordova in 1902 and soon a boom town mining black gold was attracting hundreds of rough necks and drillers. In no time coal miners began to produce high grade fuel from the rich bearing coal fields. On a tributary of the Chitina River to the north two prospectors discovered rich copper deposits in 1899. The east coast Guggenheim faction gained control of the claims in 1905 and invested heavily in the region as the Alaska Syndicate. To get copper from the mines to tidewater however they needed a railroad so they simply built one. At first Valdez was favored and then Katalla described as a booming brawling construction camp seemed to have the edge in the deadly serious competition. After a near hurricane destroyed Katalla's facilities a site on Orca Inlet was chosen by Irish engineer Michael J. Heaney, builder of the famous White Pass and Yukon Railroad. With Heaney's decision to build north from Orca Inlet up the Copper River Valley to the mines yet another booming construction town emerged almost overnight this one beneath the slopes of Mount Eyak. Heaney called the new town, Cordova and in 1906 he began laying the winding slash of steel rails across the mountains. Soon Cordova's docks were a blaze of activities. Steamers offloaded tons of construction material, supplies

and workers. The Guggenheim crews built the railroad and the railroad built Cordova. Work gangs cleared the right-of-way of what was to be known as the Copper River and Northwestern Railway with Indian and white labor working together enduring the demands of the ruthless construction schedule and the tortuous routes through the Chugach Mountains. Within five years from the beginning of construction trains were rolling on Michael Heaney's railway though he died before its completion. Surmounting the major hurdle of the Copper River crossing at mile 49 the construction of the million dollar bridge Heaney's crews linked Cordova with the Kennecott Mine complete with what Senator Bartlett described as one of the greatest enterprises of Alaska's pioneer days. Novelist Rex Beech thought so, too as he penned his adventure yarn *The Iron trail*. In 1911 a copper spike was driven to secure the last rail in place and a place in history for the railroad in commemoration of the event. Cordova's future looked bright as the millions of dollars of 70 percent pure copper ore rolled to the sea, to eastern banks, and into the local economy. However Cordova's promising future proved short lived. Southeastern coal and timber lands became entangled in the government's new emphasis on conservation and environmental protection. Coal lands were withdrawn from entry and over four and one half million acres of forest was set aside as Chugach National Forest. It was Alaska's first confrontation with national conservation movements. The conflict that developed in Cordova was one of the first acts of public protest in Alaska when Cordovans dumped imported Canadian coal into Orca Inlet in their own version of the Boston Tea Party. Cries of lock up echoed throughout the territory, but to little avail. The hard truth was Cordova fared as Kennecott fared. In 1938 when the mines proved uneconomical to operate Cordova's residents were faced with important decisions affecting their community's future. For Cordova it was a time of change and often painful readjustment. Throughout the Kennecott Guggenheim years the town had prospered and grow. Cordova was a company town, but it was also a family town with schools, churches, recreation halls, hotels, and a growing main street and business district. Even when half buried in snow the city center had the look of a small, but prosperous hillside community. For twenty years accessible only by sea, by river, or by rough overland trails Cordova entered the air age in 1933 with the construction of its first airport. The absence of easy overland connections made Cordovans aware of their isolation from supply points to population centers. The many town boosters worked energetically for road connections to Valdez and Chitina in the years following the end of World War II. Today Cordova's main street bears little resemblance to its historic façade. Most of the town's history went up in smoke and flame as fires during the 1950s and 1960s tragically destroyed the old buildings of Main Street. The old railroad tracks were torn up during the 1940s for scrap and to make way for commercial expansion. It was a tragedy for some in a community so rich in history should retain so few reminders of its past. Others saw opportunity to build and modernize where before there had only been relics of another era. In many respects Cordova's past is very much a part of its present and will certainly shape its future. To compensate for the loss of its one major economic base Cordova turned increasingly to commercial fishing, an industry which had always been of some local importance. The razor clam and salmon fisheries flourished. Cordova's packing plants and canneries became famous for their products. Today fishing and fish processing are Cordova's main industries, a fact quickly confirmed by the town's crowded small boat harbor and processing complex. Each May the boats put out to sea and return once a week to turn over their catch and to re-outfit for the next run. Many boats are family operations – sons and daughters of fishermen – keeping the family name in the business for years. This is Cordova's mainstay. Without the boats, the health of the fisheries and the processing plants Cordova's economics are likely to be in jeopardy. Under the best of circumstances fishing is a seasonal and fragile way of life. Natural disaster, work stoppage, and

fishermen's union or plant disputes can each cause hardship in a small community like Cordova. The volatility of essentially a one economy town is also mirrored in local controversies at times overshadowed by statewide issues such as d-2, antiquities withdrawals, bottom fishing, limited entry, oil development, heavy construction and industrial development, tourism and Native land management issues. If anything characterizes Cordova's future it is a large question mark with hard decisions facing the local business community, the fishermen's union, and the city government. There are real differences of opinion what to do about the local economy, how and whether to diversify, the need for something more than seasonal employment, whether the construction of the proposed Copper River highway would ultimately enhance or destroy Cordova's serene small-town flavor, how to control the high cost of living reflected in high utility costs, and how to prevent the outmigration of older families and sons and daughters who see no future here. Some memories of Cordova's past remain as images of an earlier time, not necessarily of better times, but more secure times before such things as Native land claims and protected land withdrawals divided Cordovans into factions each of which claims to have the town's future and best interest at heart. If we conserve can we grow? If we protect can we also exploit? Cordovans responded to such questions in a 1977 newspaper poll itself a source of controversy. According to those who responded economic activities and population growth were their number one concerns followed by land-use planning and the community environment. Cannery expansion and light manufacturing were favored as development options. Heavy manufacturing and outer continental shelf oil development with Cordova as a staging area were discouraged. A majority favored moderate growth and population increases and most supported opening the Copper River Highway to supplement the ferry system. Significantly there was an even split in concern for jobs and the community environment. Cordovans named local concerns rather than the larger issues of having greater impact on the community – cost of utilities, stray dogs, alcohol abuse and property taxes – concerns which effect all people at the local level. Like all small towns Cordova is somewhat at the mercy of outside interests and many Cordovans are resigned to a degree of helplessness to big government. Others retain the spirit which caused coal to be dumped in the inlet in 1911. In the meantime the fishing boats continue to go out with the tide over deep waters framed against a clear sky, but there may be clouds on the horizon through which a difficult course will have to be chartered before any clear solutions to these questions can be found.

The small island community of Wrangell lies near the southern end of the Alaska panhandle on Zimovia Strait -- 85 air miles north of Ketchikan, 150 miles south of Juneau, and 750 miles north of Seattle. It is one of the oldest communities in Alaska. Russian fur traders first visited Wrangell's fog bound shores in 1834 and they remained to exploit its coves and inlets. Alaska's second non-aboriginal settlement emerged from the rain forest as Redut Svataya Dionisiya, but the island was known by several names depending on the occupants. For the British it was Fort Stikine. To the Americans it was Wrangell, named for Baron Ferdinand Wrangel and subsequently Fort Wrangell when Alaska became an American colony. The Russians found the island and mainland occupied by Stikine River Tlingit Indians who had evolved a fascinating clan culture however ancient petroglyphs provided evidence of even earlier habitations. The Tlingits were more successful in resisting Russian domination than the Aleuts to the north. Eventually the arrival of first the British Hudson's Bay men in the 1840s and then American troops in 1867 resulted in accelerated cultural disruption and its attendant squalor, alcohol abuse, and material dependency. Because of Wrangell's strategic geographic proximity to British Canada Americans built Fort Wrangell on the northwest tip of the island and maintained a lonely isolated garrison there off and on for forty years. Soon a small town sprang up built from the rich abundance of local timber. Because

of its location near the mouth of the Stikine River Wrangell became an important trading, transportation and outfitting center for the rich Canadian northwest interior and southeast Alaska. By the 1880s Wrangell had become the largest white settlement in Alaska and the Cassiar gold strike turned the former Russian outpost into a raucous hard-bit boom town. The ships arriving from Victoria and San Francisco were jammed with stampedees. Naturalist John Muir visited Wrangell in 1879 and described the town as the most inhospitable place at first sight that he had ever seen – “No mining hamlet in the placer gulches of California nor any backwoods village that I ever saw approached in picturesque, devil may care abandon.” Not content with this Muir concluded by noting that Wrangell was a lawless drab of wooden huts built in crooked lines wrangling around the boggy shore of the island for a mile or so in the general form of the letter S without the slightest subordination to the point of the compass or to building laws of any kind. During the 1890s large numbers of Indians from surrounding villages settled near Wrangell seeking jobs, food and hooch. Planthill (?) convinced the Presbyterian Church to open its first Alaskan mission here under the direction of S. Hall Young and Dr. Sheldon Jackson to educate and cultivate souls for God. More worldly concerns characterized Wrangell’s early development. To reap a harvest of another kind the first salmon canneries were opened at Point Highfield on the northern tip of the island and elsewhere near the Stikine Delta. Sawmill operations began with the opening of the Wilson Sylvester mill predecessor of Alaska Lumber Products to tap one of the richest timber areas of North America. With these two local industries the foundations of Wrangell’s economy were laid. Hysteria of the Klondike rush in 1898 again briefly made Wrangell the center of frantic activity as the backdoor to the Yukon. One stampedeer recalled strange scenes of the old days were re-enacted, the dance halls reopened and Soapy Smith and his gang looked in and visited the saloons with their shell games and farrow tables. The hurrying crowd camped on the old parade ground of the fort and turned the open places into a tent city. Once the flood of miners and opportunists washed over Wrangell high times and easy money receded to leave only ruins and memories. The few hundred fishermen, lumberjacks and their families who found Wrangell’s quiet isolation, natural beauty and abundant resources attractive remained to build, to settle, and to keep the little town alive. Ships would arrive each summer with imported Chinese labor to work the Glacier Packing Company canneries and return each fall with fish packed from the rich Anon Creek fishing grounds. Wrangell depended upon the coming and going of ships for most of what was needed to keep the town going in the early days and often forty vessels dropped anchor each week. Today lumber cargo vessels call at Wrangell as they have since the turn of the century underscoring Wrangell’s maritime setting and re-forging its links with the past. The Alaska State Ferry System is the community’s highway and provides the only access except by air and the only contact with the rest of the state and the outside world. If the early sailing ships brought gold seekers to Wrangell’s shores today the ferry system brings another kind of adventurer – the tourist and his welcomed dollars. As in other communities where tourism is becoming both big business and big headache Wrangell is divided over whether tourism should be expanded and if it were would the economic benefits outweigh social and environmental costs. Furthermore the ferry systems which is at the nexus of the tourist industry in the Southeast is itself under a cloud of criticism for not being responsive to or meeting community needs. Timber, so important to Wrangell’s past, holds the key to Wrangell’s future. Alaska Lumber and Pulp operates two lumber mills, one in Wrangell and one on the Zimovia Highway near town. It and other operators harvest nearly a hundred million board feet of Sitka spruce and hemlock annually. Although the mills are Japanese owned they are locally managed in an atmosphere of mutual benefit. The mills payrolls support many families in the community while thousands of tons of wood chips are shipped to Sitka for processing into pulp for Japan. It is little

wonder that Wrangell is deeply concerned with the specter of d-2 and wilderness classifications for the Tongass National Forest and proposed U.S. Forest Service rare-2 guidelines. Many of Wrangell's community and business leaders are active in statewide anti-conservation organizations seeking more balanced use of the Tongass resources in an effort to prevent what most residents see as impending economic disaster and the end of a way of life. Wrangell is still nearly 20 percent Indian and the Stikine Native Organization continues to exert local economic and social influences in the community which will probably have even greater impact as land entitlements are finalized, easements determined, and Native investment committed. Unmistakably there are strong Native-white feelings in Wrangell as elsewhere in the state and such feelings surfaces the most evident cost of continuing cultural adjustment and changing realities. Like Homer and Cordova, Wrangell has a strong fishing tradition. Its two small boat harbors, cold storage facilities and canneries represent an important secondary industry. Harvest Seafood Company and Reliant Shrimp Company provide seasonal employment for plant workers and fishermen who carry on family and community traditions. The sea and those who exploit her riches and weather her moods give Wrangell a special character of its own. It is above all this special character that Wrangell residents feel must be preserved against the serious challenges it currently faces. Wrangell shares many of the common fears and dilemmas faced by other small Alaskan communities such as Nenana, Homer and Cordova. How to preserve the best of its unique community, family and individual qualities, and its small town character? How to effectively confront fast moving events and to arrive at objective rationally based decisions on issues which are subject to everything from high emotionalism to indifference to self-interest to sensitivity. How to achieve a balance between the imperative to provide for the community's needs and to build a future for growing families in a changing world and the human necessity to maintain a continuity with the past in order to guide decisions with the benefits of established and shared values. While these communities the changes and the uncertainties of the future, they seek perception and the insight to meet these challenges by reassessing where they are in terms of where they have been. For the present there remains this contrast and this possibility that the changes which have overtaken and many would say overwhelmed Alaska's two largest communities are for Nenana, Homer, Cordova and Wrangell still within their power to shape and to direct towards that blending of values and tradeoffs which they must take responsibility for and with which their children will ultimately live.