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Joe Kuklin and Dave Katsik

Dennis Harris, interviewer

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Fairbanks, Alaska

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Series: Potlatch series

Song by Ted Wesley

Jeff Kennedy said last spring Joe Kuklin and Dave Katsik won positions on the board of directors for Sealaska Corporation. According to a report from KTOO in Juneau Kuklin was elected by stockholders from the Juneau Corporation Goldbelt Incorporated. Goldbelt does not get a share from oil and gas revenues. Mineral monies go directly to stockholders. Eighty percent of these stockholders pooled proxy votes to get Kuklin elected. Kuklin works as assistant area director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Juneau. Kuklin takes care of the budget, finances, personnel and procurement for the BIA. He thinks his experience in handling money helped to get him elected to the Sealaska board.

Joe Kuklin said he was really gratified for the reception that he received in the board room. He commented that after the heat of battle everything settles down and they can get back together again and get back to working. He said he has some catching up to do since they are right in the middle of some things. The president and the staff have all assured him that whatever information he feels he requires will be made available to him. He ended up on the budget audit committee. He said is looking forward to using the skills that he has developed in the BIA and working with his old corporation. They have tentatively put in for three [land] parcels. The major parcel is on Admiralty Island and it is basically timber land. They also have a selection on the back side of Douglas and one in Burner's Bay. He said there are a number of possibilities on Burner's Bay including recreational and a boat harbor. He said at present they are in no position to be acquiring businesses until they get their land and have some kind of resource. Their whole thrust the last three years has been getting the land selection finalized. He talked about issues in Washington, D.C. One of his bosses said the land claims bill was going to start a competition between the different regions in the state and would also point out the kind of leadership and ability that was available to the different regions in the state. The success and failure of the corporations would be pinned to specific leaders or groups in power at the time when these things were taking place. He said there are some that are having some serious problems and in their case in the Southeast Sealaska has been fairly conservative. He feels that by December 17, 1991 the Sealaska stock will be a very attractive stock. The initial cautious approach is going to work out as an advantage. Once they have a real feel for what it is like to operate in the corporate world then they will become a very strong corporation in Alaska and particularly in Southeast

Alaska. Parents and grandparents are setting up ways that will make sure that the shares will be handed down in the family. He looks at it as an opportunity for his grandchildren to be enrolled or to directly benefit. The tax will be disbursed by the time they come around. The only thing that he will have then or the only way to be able to share is to share what he has and those will be handed down. He thinks that the majority of people will hang onto their stocks. It is the last tie to their aboriginal rights. His grandparents were part of that initial push for land claims. He said those stories are still being handed down to the kids that are coming along now. He said generally speaking it will always be something special that wouldn't be sold to gain a profit.

Jeff Kennedy said Dennis Harris asked Kuklin if Sealaska will invest in the recreation business. Kuklin said he sees that as being one of the significant things as Sealaska's position in the Southeast. Most of their money at this point has been invested outside of Southeast Alaska. There is a strong feeling that Sealaska should be using some of its strength to help establish an economic base in some of these communities. He said there is potential in these different areas for a viable business of some sort that will provide an economic base. Sooner or later Sealaska will be looking at recreation or tourism because of the land mass that will be available to them. Even in the timber industry there will have to be other ways of utilizing that resource. He feels that Southeast Alaska will be the recreation capital of the west coast. They will be looking at Admiralty Island and some of these other areas that are being set aside.

Jeff Kennedy said Dennis Harris asked Kuklin about the Eagle Crest area as a possibility for a ski area. He said they have looked at Eagle Crest because it started developing at the same time they were sitting down trying to get them in position to [get?] non-Native lands withdrawn. The land was already tied up and they couldn't select Eagle Crest proper and anything around it was very practical. Once they get their land selections finalized their main thrust has been to do something in this area. The chance for a large dividend is pretty slim. The only way they can benefit their shareholders is to provide some kind of economic development that they can participate in. It would be much more worthwhile than a small dividend check.

A song from the Athabascan Gwich'in about the snow geese flying over the mouth of the Yukon. Used with permission from Folkways Records.

Jeff Kennedy said Dave Katsik, head of a planning and consulting firm, also won election to the Sealaska Board. Dave Katsik said one of the first responsibilities of insurgents basically deals with respect to strategy. Insurgents must identify themselves separate from management. That goes with respect to the printing of the proxy that is going to be used for solicitation purposes and also with respect to naming oneself. They chose Operation Joshua and Caleb basically because the two men who were involved with the campaign efforts were people that had a personal relationship and experience with Jesus Christ. They were men who read the Bible and study it. They read the book of Joshua and other books in the Old Testament who brought forth men like Joshua and Caleb who chose to present a good report to the people rather than a negative report. In the biblical account that was given the land that was given to the children of Israel was promised by God. The term became the Promised Land. In order for the people to get the Promised Land Moses took an individual from each tribe to go out and spy out the Promised Land. Twelve men went out and ten men came back with an evil report and two men came back with a good report – Joshua and Caleb. Katsik said when you start out against a corporation that

has a lot of money, a lot of talent, a lot of ability and versatility it would seem to the natural mind an impossible situation to accomplish, but they felt they could accomplish it. They did make an effort and they did get elected. The responsibilities of the Board of Directors are awesome responsibilities. There are a lot of things that they must weigh and make the right kind of decisions. That doesn't mean they have to be ultra conservative or make quick decisions. Every board member must do their homework about every decision. His major goal deals with being a servant to the corporation and to the people. Every person in the role of leadership is to provide service for the people. He feels when you work along those lines it will help him to make those types of decisions. Any time the Native people move to a positive realm then they will become a benefit to themselves and the non-Native sector in the entire state of Alaska. He is in a nutshell a servant to the shareholders, the stockholders and also to the corporation.

Jeff Kennedy said Dave Katsik thanked the people who helped to get him elected.

Dave Katsik thanked Mr. Joe Bennett, Sr., Charlie Jim, Sr. from Angoon, Peter Jack, Sr., from Angoon, Raymond Paddock, Jr., Herbert Mercer, and Walter Johns, Jr. who was his campaign manager. He talked about how much Walter Johns helped him during his election. He said prior to his election they worked with a number of people to identify common goals. He talked about people working to obtain proxies. They had people going door to door for proxies and he saw an opportunity to go door to door and let people know about himself and his candidacy for the board of directors. He said people appreciate recognition from their leadership.

Dave Katsik said these are exciting times for everybody not only the Sealaska Corporation. A lot of people are doing something new and different. One of the biggest things he has found in his work is the fact that they have been so regulated by state and federal and local governments. He said they are always looking for reasons why they can't do something rather than looking at reasons that they should be doing something such as alternative approaches to achieves goals for his people. He thinks his leadership should be looking at reasons why they should be doing things. He said leadership could make things happen. They as men and women should be able to see the decisions that they make in the future, the ramifications of the decisions that they make. There needs to be a lot of planning and work in any position of responsibility. As an elected member of the board he sees a lot of work that they are going to be involved in. He is excited about it. He said he appreciates all the stockholders that voted for him. He wanted to make the point that the stockholder was the winner.

Music by Buffy Sainte Marie.