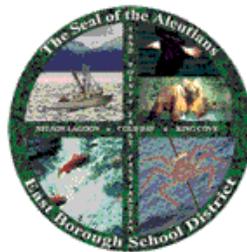
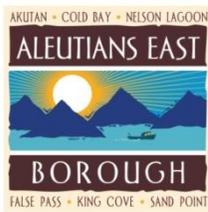


## In the Loop



Bringing the Aleutians East Borough, the AEB School District and Eastern Aleutian Tribes together by sharing common goals.

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## State Honorably Discharges Alaska Territorial Guard Members Who Served During WWII

### Arseny Kenezuroff of Belkofski was One of Sixteen ATG Members Honored During the Ceremony

They bravely guarded Alaska's shores against a possible Japanese invasion during World War II. The Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG), a civilian militia, was organized to defend the state's homeland. During a special ceremony at the Alaska Heritage Center on May 26<sup>th</sup>, state and military officials, family members and friends paid tribute to 16 members of the ATG who were honorably discharged 70 years after they had served their country. Relatives received medals, ATG uniform patches and certificates on their behalf.



State and military officials, family members and friends paid tribute to 16 members of the ATG who were honorably discharged 70 years after they had served their country during a special ceremony at the Alaska Heritage Center on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

“Back then, Alaska was a very poor state,” said Dr. Michael Livingston, Instructional Design Supervisor, Alaska Native Heritage Center. “We didn’t have the funding to hire soldiers. We were also very poor from a military standpoint.”

“When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and when the military pulled all the soldiers out of Alaska, there was virtually no one left but the people,” said Verdie Bowen, Director of Alaska’s Office of Veterans Affairs.

“Alaska was left with a gap in our defense at home,” said Major General

Laurie Hummel, Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard and the Commissioner of Alaska’s Department of Military & Veterans Affairs.

On June 4, 1942, when bombs were dropped on Dutch Harbor, it became apparent that Alaska was vulnerable. The need to protect Alaska’s coastlines became even more critical. Shortly afterward, Major Marvin “Muktuk” Marston and Governor Gruening encouraged the military to allow the recruitment of citizens throughout Alaska. Thousands of residents, many of them Native, and some as young as 8 and as old as 80, eagerly stepped forward to defend Alaska. A few of them were women. Major Marston traveled across thousands of miles throughout Alaska to enlist members of the newly formed Alaska Territorial Guard.



Relatives received medals, ATG uniform patches and certificates on behalf of the ATG members honored at the ceremony.

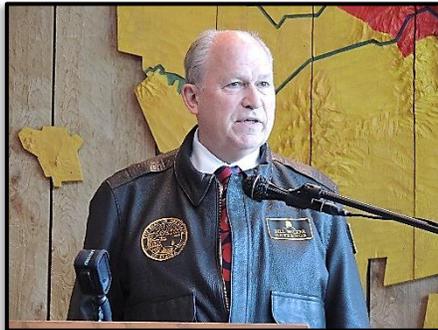
“No matter where they went, they had no problems enlisting people to join the Alaska Territorial Guard,” said Bowen.

From 1942 to 1947, more than 6,400 Alaskans served in the ATG. They acted as the eyes and ears of the military. Their orders were to patrol the coastline, report any unusual persons, objects, aircraft or ships to the nearest military authority.

“They were fiercely dedicated to the well-being of all Alaskans,” said Major Hummel. “The members of the ATG had scarce military resources, but they had an abundance of local knowledge and an ability to thrive in a natural environment. So ATG members were the brave guardians of Alaska’s frontiers.”



**“No matter where they went, they had no problems enlisting people to join the Alaska Territorial Guard,” said Verdie Bowen, Director of Alaska’s Office of Veterans Affairs.**



**Governor Walker said it’s important to recognize the large percentages of Alaska Natives that stepped up back then.**

Governor Bill Walker said honoring those who stood up for Alaska early on is very humbling to him, especially because he and Lt. Governor Byron Mallott both have special connections to that time period.

“It’s ironic that we have a lieutenant governor whose father served in the Alaska Territorial Guard (Private Jay Byron Mallott of Yakutat) and my father (Ed Walker), served in the Alaska Scouts,” said Governor Walker, “so we come from similar roots and backgrounds.”

Governor Walker said he has a photo of the ATG hanging on the wall in his Anchorage office that has special meaning to him.

“It’s a testament to where we are now,” he said.

Major General Laurie Hummel said the roots of today’s Alaska National Guard stretch back to those of the Alaska Territorial Guard.

“Our soldiers and airmen know that,” she said. “They stand a little taller and they’re even more proud of what it is that we do to protect and defend the United States and Alaska because we have to stand in their shoes. Their missions today, to provide homeland security and domain awareness, are really a direct result of what the Alaska Territorial Guard before us did so well.”



**Major General Laurie Hummel said the roots of today’s Alaska National Guard stretch back to those of the Alaska Territorial Guard.**

Governor Walker said it’s important to recognize the large percentages of Alaska Natives that stepped up back then.

“They all did. Everybody stepped up and said let’s defend this country,” he said.

However, it wasn't until the year 2000 that the members of the Alaska Territorial Guard were granted U.S. veteran status, acknowledging the contributions of the Native Alaskans who bravely served our country during World War II.



**Gov. Walker presented Florence Kenezuroff with a certificate on behalf of her uncle, Private Arseny D. Kenezuroff of Belkofski, who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard.**

“I thank Senator Stevens so much for his acknowledgement of what he did to make sure they got the proper recognition,” Governor Walker said.

Because it took more than half a century for that recognition to occur, it was a surprise to many people to learn they had relatives who served in the ATG.

“Many people weren't aware that their ancestors were in the Alaska Territorial Guard,” Dr. Livingston said, “and they weren't aware that they can be honored through the process that we're doing today.”

Florence Kenezuroff was one such person who didn't realize her uncle, Private Arseny D. Kenezuroff of Belkofski, served in the Alaska Territorial Guard until Dr. Livingston contacted her.

“I was quite surprised because I knew nothing about it,” she said. “I said, what? How can that be? I'm just learning about it piece by piece. Every time I learn something new about my family I become elated. He (Arseny Kenezuroff) was a very good man. He was always happy and smiling. I'm quite proud,” she said.

Arseny Kenezuroff was one of four Aleut soldiers posthumously discharged during the May 26th ceremony. The other Aleut ATG members were Private George Bourdukofsky of St. Paul; Private John P. Merculieff of St. Paul; and Private Constantine Lestenkof of St. George.



**Gov. Walker presented Barry Lestenkof with a certificate on behalf of Private Constantine Lestenkof of St. George.**



**Gov. Walker presented Jason Bourdukofsky with a certificate on behalf of Private George Bourdukofsky of St. Paul. Photo courtesy: Office of Gov. Bill Walker.**

Dr. Livingston said living ATG soldiers are increasingly rare, but two were recently located in King Cove: Knute Anderson and Buddy Bendixen. Both men were invited to the King Cove Clinic to watch the event through a live video teleconference feed. The Office of Veterans Affairs plans to recognize them in person soon.

Other ATG members honored at the ceremony were:

Private Frederick A. Asicksik of Shaktoolik; Lieutenant Robert B. Atwood of Anchorage; Private Ole O. Bahr, Jr. of Nome; Private Nick Beans of Mountain Village; Private Laura Beltz Wright of Haycock; Private Peter Cleveland of Eek; Private Harold C. Dinkel of Palmer; Corporal Carl S. Durand of Anchorage; Private Fred L. Grindle of Naknek; Lieutenant Henry S. Littlefield of Metlakatla; Private Jay Byron Mallott of Yakutat; and Private Steve Otten of St. Michael.

The May 26<sup>th</sup> ceremony was spearheaded by Dr. Livingston, an Aleut Corporation shareholder who enjoys World War II history and family tree research. Of the 6,400 ATG soldiers who have been officially recognized, only about 2,600 have been honorably discharged. Dr. Livingston said there may have been as many as 20,000 who have served.



Gov. Walker presented Larry Mercurieff with a certificate on behalf of Private John P. Mercurieff of St. Paul. Photo courtesy: Office of Gov. Bill Walker.



The Office of Veterans Affairs hopes to have all soldiers honorably discharged by 2042, which marks the 100-year anniversary of the Alaska Territorial Guard.

In addition, the goal of the Office of Veterans Affairs is to begin correcting the oversight of the past, and allow future generations access to their ancestors' service records.

If you believe your ancestors might have served in the ATG, please contact Dr. Michael Livingston at (907) 330-8008 or at [mlivingston@alaskanative.net](mailto:mlivingston@alaskanative.net) or contact Mercedes Angerman at (907) 334-0871 or at [mercedes.angerman@alaska.gov](mailto:mercedes.angerman@alaska.gov).



Retired Senior Master Sergeant Erik Heiker, U.S. Marine Corps and the Alaska Air National Guard, son of Cold Bay Magistrate Karl Keiker (served as magistrate from the early 1970s to 1986), attended the ceremony in military uniform. Photo courtesy: Office of Gov. Bill Walker.

More information can be found at <http://veterans.alaska.gov/alaska-territorial-guard.html>.

<http://aleut.info/index-2.html> or in the book, “Men of the Tundra” by Muktuk Marston.

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## **Employees Take Part in Oil Spill Response Training in Akutan**

Being prepared and knowing what to do if an oil spill were to occur in the Akutan Small Boat Harbor is critical. Last week, seven employees from the City of Akutan, Trident Seafoods and the Aleutians East Borough took part in an oil spill response training for local responders conducted by Alaska Chadux.

“A lot of what we talked about is having a good plan to work out how you’re going to do things safely, what’s appropriate, and how to deal with small emergencies on your own,” said Chris Burns, Preparedness Manager at the Alaska Chadux Corporation. “It’s also important to know how to activate resources to help if something bigger happens.”

Seven employees participated in the training, which occurred May 23 – 25, 2017.

“In order to build the Akutan Harbor, the Borough had to comply with mitigation measures required by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,” said Anne Bailey, Aleutians East Borough Administrator. “One of them was to complete a geographic response strategy to purchase oil response equipment and provide training to local responders in case of an emergency.”

OSHA requires individuals responding to oil spills to be trained under the HAZWOPER (Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response) standard. It consists of a 24-hour (3-day) emergency response class, which included discussions of safe work practices, land and water petroleum response strategies, and spill response organization and process. The objective of the training was to prepare students to work safely on a spill response involving petroleum products.

“So we spent some time in the classroom discussing things from a theoretical perspective,” said Burns. “We went out to the Conex, took inventory and checked out the gear.”

The class also conducted tabletop exercises and examined the tank farm and the power plant. Burns said Alaska Chadux encourages local responders to practice what they’ve learned on their own time when the weather cooperates and the tidal conditions are right.

“I think it’s very important to have local responders trained so they can deal with situations like these,” said Bailey.

However, the training doesn’t stop here.

“It’s our intent to come out and do follow-up training because there’s a refresher requirement under the HAZWOPER standard,” said Burns.

The training has benefits for Alaska Chadux as well as for local responders.

“We respond to oil spills throughout the State of Alaska,” said Burns. “This gives us some local area knowledge and contacts in another remote spot, so if we had to work out there, we’ve got a better idea of what it’s like.”

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## Congratulations Graduating AEBSD Seniors!



Sand Point’s graduating seniors: Josh Bravo, Michael Straud, Josh Sills, Dantezza Pangilinan, Madison Thompson, Silvana Morris, Colten Mack, Abe Bravo and Jonathan Rotter.





King Cove's graduating seniors: McKenna Gould, Ian Samuelson, Kristopher Babcock and Sydney Wilson.



False Pass School (from left to right): Alex Dulian, graduating senior, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders moving into high school: Regan Hoblet, Dayton Hoblet and Makena Sandell.



Akutan's graduating senior: Tom Nic Tcheripanoff.



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## Got News?

If you have news you'd like to share or if you'd like to subscribe, please email [ltanis@aeboro.org](mailto:ltanis@aeboro.org) or call Laura Tanis at (907) 274-7579.





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