

- Police report
- Week in review
- World

B-2  
B-3-4  
B-6-7

Rod Boyce, City Editor; 459-7575

FAIRBANKS  
Daily News-Miner

## LOCAL

Section  
B

Sunday, March 8, 1998

Dermot  
Cole

### Akasofu's achievement

**THE YOUNG GRADUATE** student from Japan read a research paper by Sydney Chapman and wrote to the great scientist with piercing questions about the physics of the northern lights.

Chapman, who did pioneering auroral research at the University of Alaska, replied to Syun-Ichi Akasofu that he didn't know how to answer the young man's questions. He invited him to come to Alaska to help find some of the answers.

Akasofu, who went from being Chapman's prize student to one of the world's most quoted scientists, has found many answers in his four decades of research at the University of Alaska.

During the past 12 years, Akasofu has been director of the Geophysical Institute, leading the institute during an era in which it has made great progress.

The institute relies on the state of Alaska for \$3 million of its \$25 million budget. The rest comes from research grants. GI scientists earn from institutions throughout the country, grants that help the institute return \$2 million a year to the university to pay for overhead.

Not long after he became director of the institute, Akasofu had an idea to create a formal arrangement that would allow more international researchers to follow the path he took to Fairbanks and study the most pressing issues of the Arctic.

The fruition of that effort, one of the great success stories to emerge from the University of Alaska in many years, is taking shape next to the Geophysical Institute.

Thanks to Akasofu's leadership, the \$32 million International Arctic Research Center is to open in early 1999.

The frame of the building was completed last fall and workers have continued on the project all winter. Painting and drywall taping and other interior work is now under way.

Among the first tenants will be the National Weather Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Japanese space agency and the Japanese marine science center.

To bring them together, Akasofu has had to engage in a form of shuttle diplomacy between Washington, D.C., and Tokyo.

For the past few years he has been in one or the other city about once a month, painstakingly working out the details with key government and industry leaders and scientists. When an objection was raised in one office, he would often have to go halfway around the world to resolve it.

He compared the task to climbing a mountain in which you always think that you are near the summit, yet as you get a little farther along you see that there is still more climbing to be done.

But the center is becoming a reality. About 60 percent of the construction money has been provided by the Japanese. The operating budget the first year will be about \$15 million, funded by government and nongovernment agencies in both countries.

Vice President Al Gore and the Japanese Prime Minister have both expressed interest in the International Arctic Research Center at the top level of inter-governmental relations between the two nations.

**ONE CRITICAL ISSUE** for science at the moment is global warming. Akasofu said the work he and the research center "will become one of the most crucial factors" in determining how much carbon dioxide can be released into the air.

The Arctic is the area where the effects of global warming will be the most prominent and there is an urgent need to determine what the rate of warming is from the use of fossil fuels for human activities.

"This will be a major scientific project for years to come," said Akasofu.

In the years ahead, the center could propel scientific research in Alaska to a new level. It could enhance the role of Fairbanks as a leading location for Arctic research and draw scientists from across the globe, just as Akasofu was drawn here in 1958.



Sarah Harrel/News-Miner

**TOP SPELLER**—Claire Matthews, a seventh-grader at Tanana Middle School, smiles after winning the fifth Interior Alaska Spelling Bee Saturday in the Hering Auditorium. Matthews, who also won in 1997, will travel to Washington, D.C., for the National Spelling Bee.

By SEAN COCKERHAM  
Staff Writer

Words like "osteoporosis" and "Sagittarius" had winnowed the field of 101 top Interior Alaska spellers down to an elite pair after eight anxious rounds Saturday.

Defending champion Claire Matthews, a seventh-grader at Tanana Middle School, nailed the word "carotid."

Then her lone remaining rival, Weller Elementary School sixth-grader Loren Schmidt, stepped up to the microphone. Upon hearing that his word was "ineffable," Schmidt grinned in bemusement and asked for a definition. "It means 'incapable of expressing in words,'" answered announcer Johnnie Newman, a Ryan Middle School teacher.

The definition proved appropriate, as that would be the word which the astute Schmidt could not conquer. And by correctly spelling the next word, "plaintively," Matthews took the crown.

Matthews in late May will make her second straight trip to Washington, D.C., for the National Spelling Bee. Last year she made it to the third round of nationals before "depreicated" knocked her out.

Matthews said she wasn't counting on winning the Interior Alaska spelling bee again, but she knew that she was ready for the competition.

"I studied more than I did last year, so I was pretty sure I would do well," Matthews said.

Matthews has tried to study the Padeia every day—a manual which is distributed to all the contestants and from which many of the words for the spelling bee are drawn.

"When she went to the national spelling bee in Washington, D.C., last year she realized that some of the words you can't sound out, you have to study them," said Claire's mom, Beth Behner.

Matthews said she's excited about having the chance to return to Washington, D.C., and not just because it means another crack at the nation's top spellers.

"There's a lot of fun, not just for the spelling bee," Matthews said.

She will join the winner of the Anchorage spelling bee in representing Alaska at

nationals. The Anchorage bee used to be the only one in the state before the Interior Alaska bee began five years ago, said organizer Joe Wagner. Matthews is the first two-time winner, he said.

The local event is sponsored by the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner.

After Matthews and Schmidt, there was a three-way tie for third place between North Pole Elementary seventh-grader Corbin Sanders, Arctic Light Elementary sixth-grader DeWayne Waugh, and Ryan Middle School seventh-grader Wiley Bogen. Bogen won the event as a fifth-grader in 1996.

There was a two-way tie for fifth place between Woodriver Elementary fifth-grader Jacqui Lanni and Anne Wien Elementary School sixth-grader Jessica Pena.

Schools throughout the Interior have their own fourth- through eighth-grade spelling bees, and send their top three spellers to compete in Fairbanks.

Thirty-four schools participated this year, including ones from as far afield as Cantwell, Venetie and Healy Lake, Wagner said.

## Rose building reaches the end of the road

### Historic structure comes down

By KATE RIPLEY  
Staff Writer

The Rose building, which the state bought for \$300,000 three years ago and recently sold for \$113, is coming down piece by piece.

The log and plywood structure—shattered for years as preservation groups, borough and state officials debated what to do with it—is to be torn down by autumn. With a crowbar and ladder, that's what Peter Kristeller, the building's new owner, started doing this week.

Whether the 1920s building will be resurrected and restored elsewhere is unknown, since Kristeller isn't talking. Architect Patty Peirso, who's trying to save the building, says she's talking to Kristeller to work out some kind of deal to preserve it.

But even Peirso has no idea what will happen. "It isn't an open and closed book," she says. The Rose building's most recent past is probably more colorful than its early history. Claus Naske, a University of Alaska Fairbanks history professor and chairman of the joint city-borough historical commission, calls it "much ado about nothing."

It started in the 1980s, when state transportation planners decided to expand Illinois Street. A number of historic structures were in the way, and the Rose building was identified as one of them. In 1985, state, federal and borough officials signed a document promising to use federal highway money to relocate the building. The moving cost was pegged at \$293,000.

In the meantime, Fairbanks resident John Reeves bought the property in 1991, paying \$60,000 for it. He complained the impending road project hung like a cloud over the building, preventing him from attracting investors and developing the property as he said he would do. Eventually he enticed the state into buying.

The state wasn't really ready yet to purchase right-of-way for the project, but worried about a lawsuit from Reeves, said John Miller, DOT's right-of-way chief. State officials hired an outside appraiser, who pegged the property's value at \$225,000, in part because it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Reeves argued the amount should be higher, and state officials

settled on a \$300,000 purchase price in 1994.

At the time, the assessed value for property tax purposes was \$35,558.

"Standing back at the forest, I just shake my head and wonder, 'Gad, how did we get here?'" Miller said. "In hindsight, the decision to do the advanced acquisition (purchase from Reeves) was a bad decision. It was a bad move."

At the time, however, "it was a series of incremental decisions, that in and of themselves weren't bad."

With the building in government's hands, historic preservationists debated over the next four years what to do with red and green structures. Some people advocated moving and restoring it, but others argued the building wasn't worth saving and that the federal highway money—the \$293,000—would be better spent on other historic buildings.

Finally last September, an amendment to that 1985 memorandum was signed by all original parties—federal highway officials, the state historic preservation officer, DOT and the local historic preservation commission. The upshot of the amendment was this: DOT could do whatever it wanted with the building, and the \$293,000 could be used for other worthy historic preservation projects.

It was a decision heartily endorsed by Naske, as well as the rest of the joint historic commission.

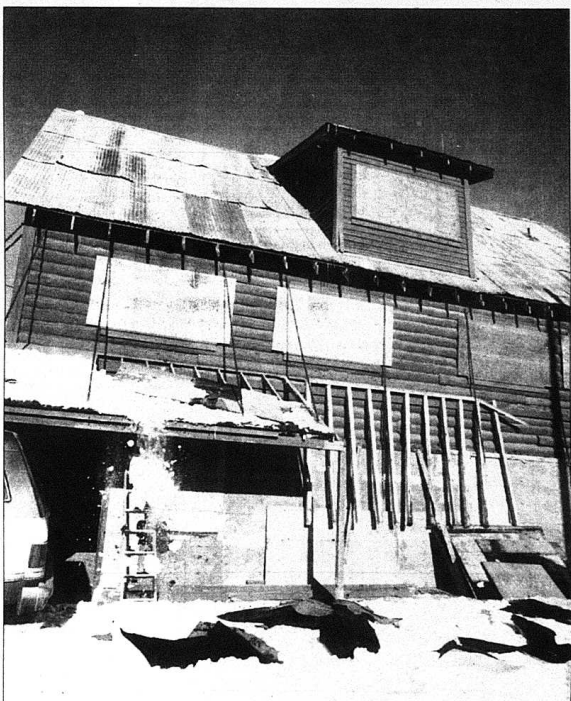
"The Rose building supposedly came from Chena. Well, closer examination showed that the origins are very, very murky," Naske said. "It really doesn't have any historical value that can be seen."

So, DOT put removal of the building out to bid. After a couple of delays—at the behest of the Chamber of Commerce—the bid opening was held Dec. 10.

Kristeller was the low bidder. He posted a \$5,000 bond and paid \$113 for it.

DOT's Miller admits state officials look like they bungled the project, especially in paying Reeves so much for the property, then selling it for so little.

But Terry Richards, DOT's environmental analyst, prefers to look at the matter in a positive light. "We get nailed on a lot of



Sarah Harrel/News-Miner

**COMING APART**—Peter Kristeller, the new owner of the Rose building on Illinois Street, takes plywood off the porch roof at the front of the historic structure Wednesday. He is required to remove the building, clean up the site and fill in the hole by Sept. 15. Kristeller is not saying what his plans are for the salvaged materials.

things," she said, "but this one, this gives a healthy chunk of money to local historic properties."

The joint historic commission hasn't decided yet what to do with the \$293,000, though the state historic preservation officer must review any proposal. The federal cash could be matched with grants so an even larger chunk is available.

"I'm proud of this one. It just turned out good," said Richards. Assemblywoman Nancy Webb would agree, if it didn't mean the Rose building's demise. Webb, Peirso and Joseph Notkin, another architect, have been trying to come up with a development plan for the building, which they believe is significant historically.

"It's one of only two remaining log buildings from that era," Webb said. "Once again, DOT has bulldozed their way through this issue."

The Rose building is named for Louis Rose, who owned the property from 1938 to 1945. Its original date of erection is unknown, though was reportedly relocated from Chena between 1925 and 1927.

It has been in its present location ever since. Over the years it served as a restaurant, rooming house, grocery store, barbershop, supply store, rental shop, flooring store, tax service and small engine repair shop, according to a 1996 condition report on the building.

Peirso said she doesn't know how much moving and restoring the building would cost, or if it's financially feasible. She said she has seen parties interested in purchasing the building from Kristeller, but she declined to name them. "We're just so close."

She said Kristeller "is considering" first disassembling parts of the building that were added onto the original structure. "That would give us a couple more weeks or a month to come up with our answer and not stop him in his work," Peirso said.

Webb said two groups, including the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and Fairbanks Neighborhood Housing Service, were interested in saving the building.

But Pam Held, the chamber's president and chief executive officer, noted the chamber withdrew its objection to the bid process.

"We were trying to support the efforts of other organizations that felt it was a viable project," Held said. "But I think the most pressing issue is to get that road expansion under way."

Rose Cade, of Fairbanks Neighborhood Housing, said her organization took a look at the old building at the request of Webb. But the board of the non-profit **SEE ROSE BUILDING, Page B-2**

### Correction

A quote in Saturday's Health column was inadvertently cut. The quote should read: "No person injured by the cold should be considered dead until they are re-animated," according to Dr. Jeff Baurick.

### Clarification

Fairbanks' Superior Court Judge Mary Greene was surprised that the public perceived that the court system didn't treat minorities fairly in a recent study on the court system's fairness and access. Statistical data in the report did not support that claim.



Photo from the Noel Wren Library collection

**HISTORIC STRUCTURE**—The Rose building has housed a variety of businesses since it was constructed in the mid-1920s. When this picture was taken in 1930, the lower floors of the building at 520 Illinois St. were leased by a local grocery store that got some of its supplies from nearby gardens. The upper floors were used as apartments and occasionally as hotel rooms.