

Ketchikan Daily News, 14 July 2007

### **William (Bill) C. Thomas**

Former delegate, William (Bill) C. Thomas, died in Seattle with his family by his side on Monday, July 9th, after a lengthy battle with pneumonia. He was alert right to the end and was glad that his family was able to be there with him. Bill was Sukteeneidi (Dogsalmon); Kogwaantaan (Wolf) yeti.

Bill was a lifelong and staunch member of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. He was the former president of Saxman Camp #15 and was a Lifetime Member of that camp at the time of his death. He first became a delegate to ANB Grand Camp in 1967 and held a number of Grand Camp offices as well as chaired many of the convention committees. He also spent many years as delegate to the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (T&H) General Assembly and was very active in the Ketchikan T&H Community Council. A couple of years ago he was selected as the official elder representative from Southeast Alaska to the Alaska Federation of Natives Elders and Youth Conference. He served several terms on the Council of the Ketchikan Indian Community and was an elder advisor to the Council at the time of his death.

He was a Sealaska Corporation and a Shaan Seet, Inc shareholder; he was a member of the Shaan Seet Board of Directors.

His passion was the protection of subsistence rights for Alaska Natives. He was very proud to serve as the chair of the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Advisory Council and attended most of the State-wide Federal Subsistence board meetings whenever he could. He grew up in a subsistence home and so his knowledge of subsistence utilization in Southeast Alaska and his understanding of meeting rules of order gave him a strong voice at these subsistence meetings.

Bill always enjoyed talking about his younger days as a commercial fisherman. He had the best of time as a crewmember on the Louise II when it was skippered by Richard Carle, Sr. Richard was a hard fisherman but everybody enjoyed fishing with him. When Bill moved to Ketchikan he went to work with the United States Coast Guard as a civilian shop worker. He became skilled at working with fiberglass products used extensively by the Coast Guard to repair their boats and equipment. He made many friends while working for the Coast Guard. After retiring from the Coast Guard he went to work as the Director of the Indian Education Program for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District and after he retired from that job he volunteered to help young people achieve their educational goals.

Bill served in the Army Medical Corps and was proud to be a veteran. Though he wasn't a doctor he was very interested in medics. He spent most of his military time in Puerto Rico.

Bill was proud of his family. He is survived by his wife, Dianna; children: Billy and Romona; grandson Chris; brothers: Ralph, Lonnie, James, and Ed, as well as numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents Sam and Bessie Thomas; brothers Elwood and Richard; and sisters Millie Bergeron and Helen Olsen.

Bill will be long remembered for his commonsense outlook on life and his keen sense of humor. He was very considerate of the less fortunate.

He was buried at Bayview Cemetery in Ketchikan, AK.