

THE MUKLUK TELEGRAPH

The Voice of the Alaska Native Health Consortium

Moving On **FILE COPY**

Alaska Native Medical Center Administrator Rear Admiral Richard Mandsager Retires

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This fall, Rear Admiral Richard Mandsager, M.D., will step down after nearly 15 years as ANMC Administrator. His career in Alaska started with the Indian Health Service, at the old hospital that remained in operation 30 years after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommended the earthquake-damaged facility be replaced. He leaves behind an award-winning, state-of-the-art hospital under tribal management.

"ANMC is the thriving hospital that it is today because of the dedication and hard work of Dr. Mandsager," said Indian Health Service (IHS) Director Dr. Michael H. Trujillo, M.P.H., M.S. Mandsager oversaw design and construction of a new hospital, the move into it, and the transition to tribal management. That transition ended an era in Alaska of IHS oversight that is still the norm for tribes and Native communities in the rest of the United States.

"Richard's exceptional efforts have helped ensure a healthier future for Alaska Natives, their children, and for generations to come," Trujillo said.

Those accomplishments afforded Mandsager one of the highest military ranks, that of two-star Rear Admiral, at the age of 42. Fellow physician and long-time coworker Tom Nighswander said "He's one of the youngest admirals I've known." Moreover, the Public Health Service has honored Mandsager with its highest award for a Commissioned Corps officer, the Distinguished Service Medal.

"As I leave this job, one of my greatest senses of satisfaction is how the Alaska Native community was influential in the design and how this facility is owned by all the communities of Alaska Natives," Mandsager said. "My belief is that



Dr. Rosalyn Singleton and Dr. Richard Mandsager with a patient in 1992 at the Pediatric Clinic.

healing is a whole lot more than the doctor-patient-treatment protocol. It's the community, it's a sense of pride, it's a sense of, 'I like that place, I like those people,'" said Mandsager.

Mandsager is also pleased the new hospital includes countless features designed to serve staff needs and provide an attractive work environment. "I think the staff feels much better about themselves when they work at a place they feel proud of," he said.

Southcentral Foundation President and CEO Katherine Gottlieb, has worked with Mandsager since 1985. "I find that he has been an excellent person for ...trying to involve the tribes and tribal organizations in his decision-making way back when we weren't so together. And he did that a lot."

Seldovia Village Tribal President and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Board Chairman Don Kashevaroff took part in the talks leading to tribal management. He said he was initially leery just because of Mandsager's position in the IHS hierarchy, but he learned Mandsager was fair. "I thought he was Darth Vader, but it turned out he was a Jedi knight," he said with a grin. "Basically he tried to push what he thought would be the best care for the patients as opposed to the best political solution. Plus, he's one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet, very easy to get along with," Kashevaroff said.

SCF's Katherine Gottlieb said Mandsager keeps patient care foremost. "He has played a great role in making that transition [to tribal management] real smooth, so that the provision of health care throughout the whole hospital was not disrupted or interrupted."

Mandsager's commitment to quality care has led to improved ANMC services such as quicker appointments, shorter waits, and better access to specialty services.

Fellow physician and long-time coworker Dr. Tom Nighswander said Mandsager's character reflects his upbringing as the son of a 'missionary doc.' "The thing that has impressed me about Dick is his integrity and honesty, [and] the modesty with which he's taken this job over the years and executed it."

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium President and CEO Paul Sherry said Mandsager moves easily from, say, his role as an advocate for quality care despite budget cuts, to compassionate caregiver. Sherry said "Interacting with him while he is in his role as

Administrator is very different than the way people see him when they bring their children in to see him as their Pediatrician."

Indian Health Service Area Director Chris Mandregen has worked with Mandsager for the past ten years, starting in the Medical Procurement Department in the old hospital.

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A Career Based on Helping Others

Staff Report

Richard Mandsager was born into a family committed to the idea of helping others. When he was three years old, his physician father decided to become a medical missionary for the Lutheran Church and the Mandsager family moved from Iowa City, Iowa to France for language training.

They went on to Cameroon where they

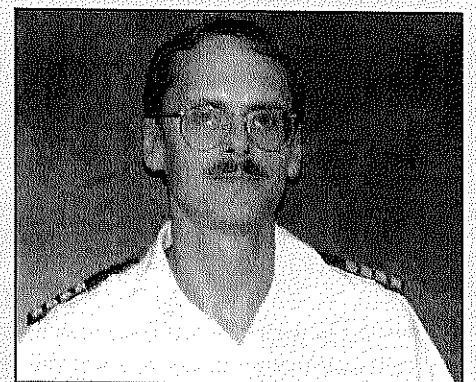
lived and worked until the future physician was 13 years old.

From Africa, the family returned to Iowa and a young Richard attended high school in Marshall Town. He attended college in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and then medical school in Iowa City. After completing a Pediatrics Residency in Los Angeles, he went to Oklahoma City to repay his Federal scholarship. There he began the ascent into administration that

would eventually lead him to challenges in Alaska.

Drafted to be the Deputy Director for the Oklahoma Service Unit for IHS, he worked out of Oklahoma City until 1985. Then, at age 34, Mandsager moved his young family to Anchorage to take the position of hospital Administrator. He and his wife Ruth had two small children: John and Rachel. John, the oldest, has just fin-

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A younger Dr. Richard Mandsager with a moustache.



In order to excel, you must be completely dedicated to your chosen sport.

You must also be prepared to work hard and be willing to accept destructive criticism. Without 100 percent dedication, you won't be able to do this.

~ Willie Mays

The concentration and dedication- the intangibles are the deciding factors between who won and who lost.

~ Tom Seaver

To become a thoroughly good man is the best prescription for keeping a sound mind and a sound body.

~ Francis Bowen

Out of our beliefs are born deeds; out of our deeds we form habits; out of our habits grows our character; and on our character we build our destiny.

-Henry Hancock

The conventional definition of management is getting work done through people, but real management is developing people through work.

-Agha Hasan Abedi

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Together, they initiated purchasing improvements that have saved the hospital hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mandregan noted Mandsager's leadership in working to coordinate services with other federal health care programs in Alaska. The result has been savings of nine million dollars since 1995.

Mandsager said "I feel like I'm at the end of a chapter in the sense that there were two driving issues in terms of my personal vision for what I was doing here. One was to get the new hospital built and get that going well, and the other was to make the transi-

tion to tribal management. And both of those are now done. My sense is, 'I've done what I can do.' I have strengths and weaknesses, and it's time for somebody to build on what's been done here and build on the things I'm not so good at."

Though his work as hospital administrator will soon end, he won't be going far. Dr. Mandsager will be staying on campus as a staff pediatrician.

For a smooth transition in leadership and in support of ANMC's upcoming accreditation survey, Mandsager will continue to work in the ANMC administration offices through August and September. In October, Dr. Mandsager will transition to full-time duties in the Pediatrics Clinic of the Anchorage Native Primary Care Center.

HELPING OTHERS

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ished his sophomore year at Stanford. Rachel will be a high school senior next fall. Their youngest was not yet born, but on the way when the family moved north. Paul will be a high school freshman this fall.

Ruth Mandsager said her husband's dedication to learning ways to do his job better has sometimes meant practicing techniques, such as consensus building, on the family. "Once we bought a car and he laid it all out, 'I want to hear what everybody wants, put it out on the table and work it out instead of one person dictating.' We've laughed about it since then, but we tried to get what everyone wanted."

Ruth is pleased with his latest choice, to work in direct patient care. "Since word got out of his retirement, he has been offered jobs and he interviewed and listened intently to what they had to say, but he said, 'My heart is with Indian Health Service.' And I'm so proud of him for that. I'm proud to be married to this guy that wants to live his life helping other people."