



FALL GLORY — Grand Central sports beautiful fall colors and termination dust on the Kigluaik Mountains surrounding the valley.

Photo by David Head

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Photo by Sandra L. Medearis

HERE TO TELL ABOUT IT — J. Brent Tuttle (right) and Wayne Miller (center) had a story for Cliff McHenry (left) after high water lifted Tuttle's leased tug boat "wannabe" gold dredge onto the rocks Oct. 12 near St. Michael on Norton Sound. Sea water coming into the listing vessel sent Tuttle and Miller scurrying into survival gear and into a life boat.

Gold miners survive sinking tug boat disaster near St. Michael

By Sandra L. Medearis

J. Brent Tuttle got more adventure than he expected when he set off with a navigator to put his tugboat gold dredge wannabe away for the winter in St. Michael.

Tuttle arrived mid-season, tying up at Nome's small boat harbor in July after a month-long harrowing trip from Portland, Ore.

Now he was going to tuck his boat away, go south to tell some tales and prepare for next year.

High seas a few miles from the Norton Sound destination village had other ideas. They lifted Tuttle's 70-foot vessel onto the rocks again and again until water coming into the boat sent Tuttle and Wayne Miller, navigator, to the life raft. Both survived, plucked from the emergency craft by St. Michael people and carried to the village clinic.

As many had in TV Land the past winter, Tuttle became inspired by TV gold mining shows with dreams of golden treasures for himself and his wife.

"I was sitting on the sofa. 'I can do that,' I said to my wife."

Tuttle, living in Golden, Colo., took off west hunting for the boat that would carry him to submerged gold mining adventures offshore Nome, Alaska.

He came across Lee Hendren, owner of a towboat service based in Portland, Ore. that had been operating on the Columbia River for a hundred years.

Hendren shared Tuttle's dream. He made it easy for Tuttle to use the tugboat *Captain Hendren*. All Tuttle had to do was put in an engine.

Sixty-five thousand dollars and thousands of sea miles later, Tuttle and a partner, now gone home, hove into Port of Nome, ready for riches.

Riches did not materialize but an expensive education attached itself indelibly to Tuttle.

By his own accounts, he had not enough experience and too much of the wrong equipment. He stood on the docks days ago with credit cards maxed and pockets hanging inside out. The missus was a mortgage payment or two short of being real happy with his decision to go off to Alaska to mine gold from underwater beaches.

"Everything I had was over-engineered," he said. And then there was the weather. Another miner, at it for years, befriended Tuttle in his darkest hour. John Mehlich put Tuttle to work as a diver. Tuttle's cut of the gold they got put over \$3,000 in his pocket.

"Then came the weather. I had told my wife I would start sending

home that kind of money. I did not plan on six weeks of foul weather," Tuttle said.

Nevertheless, Tuttle did not tuck his tail. He planned to return in 2013.

"I'll be back. I know how to mine the gold now. I'll be back," Tuttle vowed, eyes full of the steadfast intent that marks those afflicted with gold fever.

A large crane at the harbor could get his vessel out of the water, getting ready to freeze now and stay that way until spring, but Tuttle had no way to get his vessel onto the uplands storage area, he said. He decided to take the *Captain Hendren* to St. Michael and stash it there until spring. In preparation, he parted out equipment on the boat—an excavator, a pump, other stuff attractive to miners, to raise some cash.

After delays wiped out the opportunity to follow a local fisherman across Norton Sound, Tuttle decided to take off Oct. 11 with Miller, whom he hired to help him. Needless to say, Tuttle had never taken a vessel to St. Michael. After losing steering control off Cordova on the way to Nome and being rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard, Tuttle was taking no chances.

The plucky pair set off to St. Michael. They traveled during the night. All went OK until they came up close, about three miles from St. Michael.

The boat stopped against something hard.

"We were against some rocks," Tuttle said, unwinding his yarn Oct.

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Juneau man accused of sexual abuse of minor arrested

By Diana Haecker

A succession of unusual circumstances led to the arrest of a 66-year-old man from Juneau in Nome last week, who was wanted on a \$100,000 arrest warrant by the Alaska State Troopers.

John W. Strickling was wanted for several counts of sexual abuse of a minor in Juneau and Ketchikan over a span of several years starting in 2002 through 2009. A grand jury indicted John W. Strickling on four counts of sexual abuse of a minor in the first degree and one count of sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree. Strickling allegedly sexually abused his step-daughter. According to court papers, the alleged abuse started when she was five years old until she was ten or eleven years old.

According to Lt. David Campbell with the Juneau Police Department, an investigation into Strickling's case began on January 10, 2011 when the victim's mother contacted the police after having learned from her daughter that Strickling, her ex-husband, had sexually abused the child. Campbell said that the investigation was

ongoing but that Juneau detectives had a hard time finding Strickling. On August 23, the Juneau district attorney stated in an affidavit that Strickling was believed to be in Nome. Campbell said that Alaska State Troopers were asked to assist, but also couldn't locate Strickling in Nome.

In a twist of fate, Strickling's whereabouts came to light through a reality show on TV. A Juneau detective working on the case happened to watch the Discovery Channel reality show "Bering Sea Gold" and saw Strickling's son being part of the TV program. The son made remarks on camera that he is in Nome with his father. Nome's radio station KNOM last week broadcasted a news story that Strickling was a wanted man and was believed to be in Nome.

Strickling heard the news piece on the radio and, according to Alaska State Trooper Sergeant Charlie Cross, walked into the AST office and surrendered to the authorities. Strickling was taken into custody and transported to Juneau for a court appearance on Monday.

NSHC CEO resigns

By Diana Haecker

After 11 months on the job, Norton Sound Health Corporation CEO and president Deven Parlikar gave his 90-day notice of resignation last week. NSHC board of directors met in an executive session on Monday, accepted the resignation and made it effective as of Monday evening, Oct. 15.

Angie Gorn, most recently vice president for Hospital Services, has been appointed by the board to lead NSHC as the interim CEO and president.

There has been a high turn-over of CEOs hired to fill the top job at NSHC in the past few years.

Parlikar was hired to lead the health corporation in November 2011, taking over from interim CEO and president Roy Agloinga who filled the position for five months after former CEO Carol Piscocoy retired in June 2011.

Carol Piscocoy served as CEO and president from 2009 until 2011. Prior to Piscocoy's leadership at the helm of NSHC, Michael Lake of Florida served only for

one year as CEO and president. NSHC did not issue a formal statement as of press time and board chair Emily Hughes could not be reached for comment.



Nugget file photo

RESIGNED— Deven Parlikar resigned his job as CEO and president of NSHC.

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