

FAIRBANKS

Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today State senator uses humor to express his thoughts on federal ANWR plans. » A2

Fugitive caught after another standoff

By **Dorothy Chomicz**
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A Fairbanks fugitive on the run for more than a week is back in jail after a 2 1/2-hour standoff in Tok early Friday morning.

Michael Bracht, 38, had been the subject of a manhunt since he failed to return to Fairbanks Correctional Center on Jan. 21 after a 12-hour release he had been granted to take care of family and estate matters. Bracht had been sentenced the day before to 32 months in prison for charges stemming from an escape from

the North Star Center halfway house last fall.

The escape from the halfway house ended after a high-speed police chase through the streets of Fairbanks that culminated in a 10-hour standoff in which Bracht threatened to shoot his girlfriend and himself at Justa Store in west Fairbanks.

The U.S. Marshals Alaska Fugitive Task Force located Bracht at a Tok residence Thursday night and approached the house at about 11:30 p.m., according to Deputy U.S. Marshal Rochelle Liedike. Task force members

made entry and determined Bracht and a woman were hiding in a room in the attic, Liedike said.

Marshals have not released the woman's name but said she was there willingly.

"She unfortunately was kind of caught in that situation," Liedike said. "We were able to convince him after approximately one hour to let her go."

During the Thursday night



Bracht

standoff, Liedike said Bracht made statements indicating he was armed.

She declined to say whether he threatened to kill his female companion or himself but said the situation was "very similar" to the Sept. 9 standoff.

Bracht surrendered about 1 1/2 hours after he released the woman, according to Liedike.

"Fortunately, we were able to talk with him and get it to end peacefully," Liedike said.

Bracht was taken to Fairbanks Correctional Center after his arrest. He was scheduled to be

arraigned Friday afternoon in Fairbanks District Court but refused to appear.

The Alaska Fugitive Task Force is a team composed of law enforcement officers from the U.S. Marshals and the Alaska State Troopers.

Fairbanks police assisted the task force with the investigation and were "instrumental" in helping to track Bracht to Tok but did not participate in the standoff, Liedike said.

Contact Dorothy Chomicz at 459-7582. Follow her on Twitter: @FDNMcime.

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Mostly sunny, warming up a little.

High today0

Low tonight-13

WEATHER » A9

Aurora forecast.

Weather permitting, active auroral displays will be visible overhead from Barrow to Juneau.

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information about the aurora, visit <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast>

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LAST SECOND

Hutchison girls defeat Galena on a buzzer beater.

SPORTS
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TOP 10 ADS

The Super Bowl ads everyone will be talking about.

NATION
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SOURDOUGH JACK:

"The flying lesson I took was in a much bigger machine."



FLYING LESSONS



Fifth-grade teacher Bill Ernst shows Serena John, 10, how to fly a drone during his class at Anne Wien Elementary School on Friday. After a two-week unit studying the principles of flight in science and the Wright brothers in history, students tried to complete a series of challenges involving flying and hovering drones during class on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. ERIN CORNELIUSSEN/NEWS-MINER PHOTOS



Zeph Silas, 10, right, signs a paper for Riley French, 11, left, saying he passed a drone flying challenge during Bill Ernst's fifth-grade class at Anne Wien Elementary School.



Caden Beach, 11, flies a drone during Bill Ernst's fifth-grade class at Anne Wien Elementary School on Friday.

Walker says \$15 gas still is possible

By **Matt Buxton**
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JUNEAU — \$15 gas could still be a possibility.

With the announcement of plans to buy Fairbanks Natural Gas, Gov. Bill Walker has told Fairbanks-area utilities the \$52.5 million purchase of the distributor's parent company Pentex could deliver gas to the them at \$10 per thousand cubic feet of natural gas. With distribution costs, that could put gas prices in the range community leaders say Fairbanks needs.

"In the roughest of estimates (\$10) is a city gate goal; assuming a \$5 storage and distribution cost, this number will result in a \$15 burner-tip price to consumers," said Grace Jang, the spokeswoman for Walker. "That is, and has been, the goal of the Interior Energy Project."

Hitting \$15 has been the goal since the inception of the gas trucking project, but it increased toward the \$20 mark as the state explored getting gas from the North Slope. The public-private partnership to build the necessary infrastructure outpaced initial estimates and slipped past initial deadlines.

GAS » A5

Substitute teacher gets prison sentence for inappropriate contact with students

By **Sam Friedman**
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A former North Pole substitute teacher was sentenced to three months of prison on Friday for fondling five students last year.

In April, two female North Pole High School students reported 23-year-old substitute teacher Michael Louis Keller grabbed their buttocks at the school in separate incidents. It was Keller's first day substituting at the school.

While investigating him, prosecutors filed more charges after learning of complaints from girls at North Pole Middle School and the Star of the North charter school. He pleaded guilty to one count of harassment, a misdemeanor similar in severity to a driving under the influence conviction.

Keller spoke by telephone at his court hearing Friday. He's been given a remand date of June 17.

He apologized to the victims and their families and asked for the opportunity to "prove (he's) not a predator."

He's pursuing a master's degree in music and has ambitions to teach at the collegiate level, he said, ambitions that could be jeopardized by the sentence. He said he's benefited from working with a psychologist.

"I can't imagine doing something so hurtful again," he said.

SENTENCED » A3

