



Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA

Inside Today Skiing Distance Nationals wrap up at Birch Hill Recreation Area. » SPORTS, B1

Snow sliding off roof buries child

By Kevin Baird
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A 4-year-old child was buried by a large amount of snow that slid off the roof of a North Pole home, trapping her for several minutes.

The child was not breathing and did not have a pulse when she was found, according to Alaska State Troopers. She was stabilized at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and flown to Anchorage for further treatment, according to troopers.

According to a trooper release, a woman called at 1:21 p.m. to say she could not find her granddaughter. The North Star Volunteer Fire Department responded to the call and with the help of family members located the child under 5 feet of snow.

North Star Volunteer Fire Department Battalion Chief Robert Wells, who was on the scene, estimated the child was buried for eight minutes.

“The fortunate part is

we were kind of in the neighborhood finishing a call and we were able to get there — crews got there immediately,” Wells said in a telephone interview Sunday.

Wells said the family was about to leave the house together and the child had gone outside first. The parents then heard the snow come crashing down from the metal roof.

Wells said the storm door leading to the back porch area opened out- ward and the door was

jammed because of the snow.

“They had to kick out the glass (of the storm door) to get outside,” Wells said. “Calling 911 without delaying really helped. We had a huge area we were searching. The whole deck — the whole back side of the house — was buried. It was a large area to search. This would be similar to an avalanche. The father actually located the child’s hand.”

Wells said medical personnel began treating the

child immediately after the child was dug out of the snow and was treated “all the way to FMH.”

Wells said he is not aware of any injuries she may have received from the falling snow.

“With the weather, a word of caution to the people with metal roofs,” Wells said. “With this kind of weather, this is going to happen. We had a lot of snow this year.”

Wells said he has worked in emergency fire services for 30 years and has never seen anything

like this incident. He has responded to avalanches at the Arctic Man event in the Hoodoo Mountains and also in Cantwell and said the North Pole incident was a similar situation.

Deputy Chief David Daniels said clearing snow off roofs is a task that is up to homeowners and they should be aware of the weight of the snow and their own bodies on their roofs.

Contact staff writer Kevin Baird at 459-7575. Follow him on Twitter: @FDNMcity.

GOOD MORNING

The weather.
Another great day: Sunny with light winds and highs in the lower to mid-40s.
High today43
Low tonight 19
WEATHER » A7

Aurora forecast.
Auroral activity will be moderate. Weather permitting, moderate auroral displays will be visible overhead from Utqiagvik to Fairbanks.

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.gialaska.edu/AuroraForecast>

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OIL LEAK
Hilcorp shuts down two platforms in Cook Inlet.
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MONDAY EDITORIAL
Read what the thumbs up and the thumbs down are from the past week.
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SOURDOUGH JACK:
“I consider this here my memoirs written one sentence at a time.”

An unquenchable thirst for life

One memoir written, 89-year-old artist can fill many more

By Kevin Baird
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Firmin Murakami stands in his kitchen quickly sketching his subject. He steals quick glances of her as she sits in a chair and plays with the house cat. In about two minutes, he’s finished sketching. Murakami’s wife, Gael, brings him a box of pastels and he hunches over a table to add color — smudging with his fingertips.

Murakami, 89, has been drawing all his life and he admits his art isn’t as good as it once was. Gael explains he’s had four surgeries on his right eye since 2012 after a blood vessel ruptured, weakening his depth perception. But Murakami persists.

The subject of his art — Daniella DeMarco — said Murakami’s depiction of her is spot on. “Art is fun,” Murakami said. “I think life is fun.”

Murakami’s life has taken him through Japanese internment camps, a stint in the Marine Corps and a varied career that eventually brought him to Fairbanks. He is sharp-witted, smart and scrappy — a Renaissance man.

Murakami briefly spoke



SPOTLIGHT • FIRMIN MURAKAMI



Top: Firmin Murakami, 89, colors a sketch with pastels Sunday afternoon in his kitchen. **Above left:** Murakami displays a self-portrait in his home. The portrait was completed in 2012. Murakami has worked in a variety of art mediums continues his art to this day. KEVIN BAIRD/NEWS-MINER **Above right:** Murakami poses in his blue dress uniform as a Marine in 1949. PHOTO COURTESY FIRMIN MURAKAMI

with DeMarco in Russian and then told a story about traveling through Siberia during the height of the Cold War and how

he lost his security clearance as a result — forcing him to leave his job as a computer programmer at Clear Air Force Base.

“I think I was tired of my job,” Murakami said with a laugh.

SPOTLIGHT » A7

Washington’s high-court fights date to Washington himself

By Mark Sherman
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Wondering when Supreme Court nominations became so politically contentious? Only about 222 years ago — when the Senate voted down George Washington’s choice for chief justice.

This year’s brouhaha sees Senate Democrats and Republicans bracing for a showdown over President Donald Trump’s nominee, Neil Gorsuch. It’s the latest twist in the political wrangling that has sur-



rounded the high court vacancy almost from the moment Justice Antonin Scalia died in February 2016.

“We are in an era of

extreme partisan energy right now,” University of Georgia law professor Lori Ringhand said. “In such a moment, the partisanship will manifest

The Supreme Court is seen April 12, 2016, in Washington.

AP FILE PHOTO/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

itself across government, and there’s no reason to think the nomination process will be exempt from that. It hasn’t been in the past.”

Each side has accused the other of unprecedented obstruction. Republicans wouldn’t even hold a hearing for Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama’s nominee. Democrats are threatening a filibuster,

which takes 60 votes to overcome, to try to stop Gorsuch from becoming a justice. If they succeed, Republicans who control the Senate could change the rules and prevail with a simple majority vote in the 100-member body.

The struggle spilled over into Sunday news shows, where the Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, told NBC’s “Meet the Press” it’s “highly, highly unlikely” Gorsuch will get 60 votes and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell vowed

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