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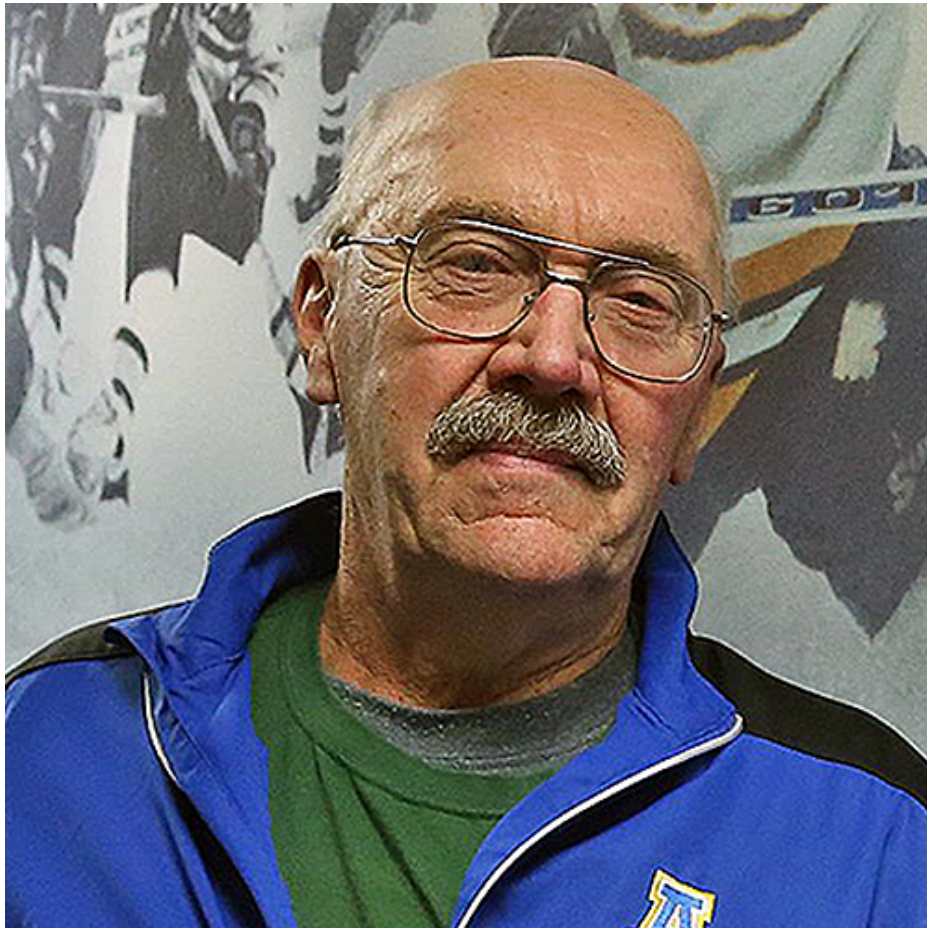
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# Class notes and in memoriam

Submissions received January-May 2021



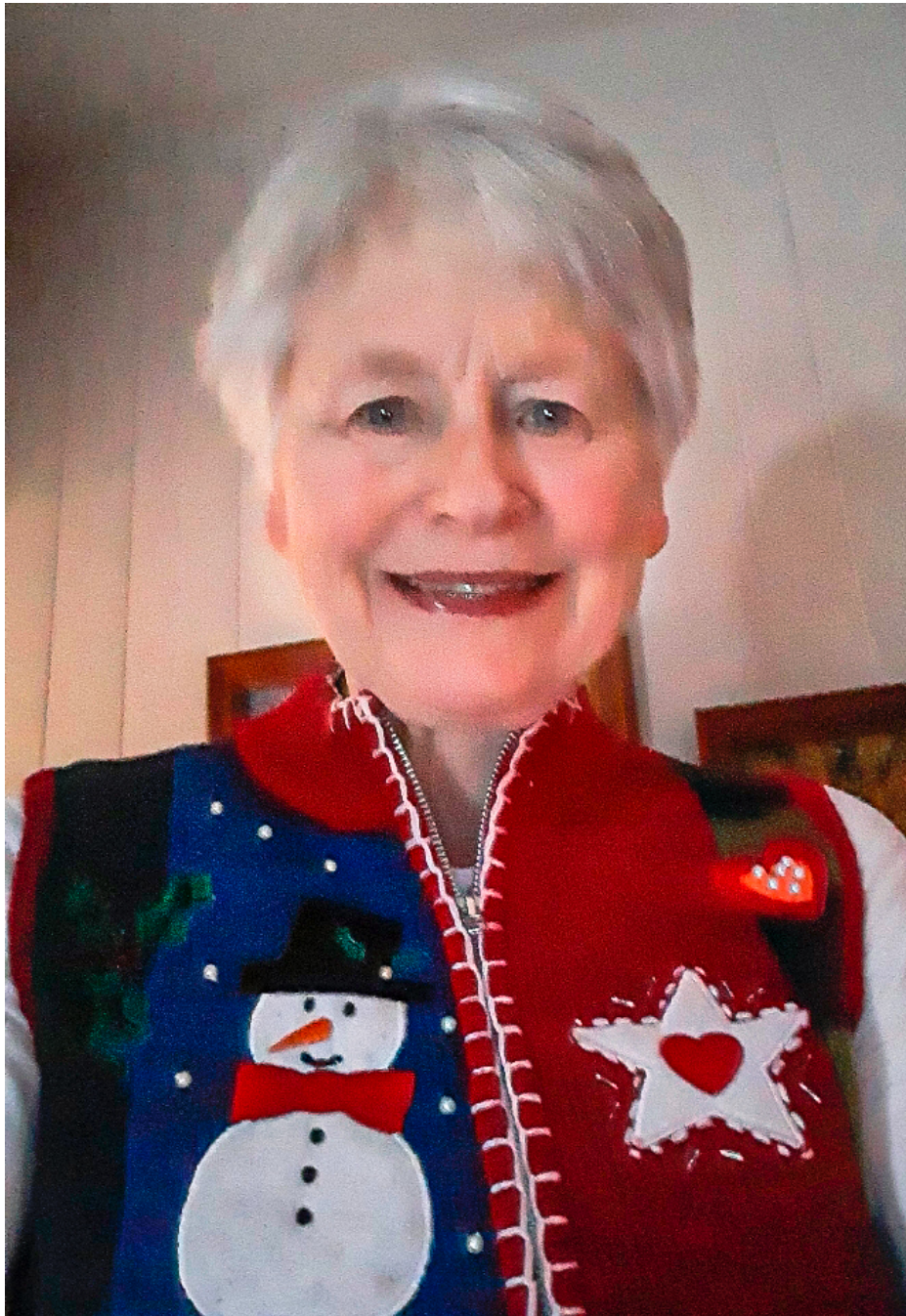
*Photos provided by alumni unless otherwise noted. Above:  
Engineering alumna Victoria Nelson '21 studies on a  
hammock during finals week in April 2021 at the Troth  
Yeddha' campus. UAF photo by Leif Van Cise.*



*Russ Knapp. Photo by Paul McCarthy.*

**Russ Knapp '69** received the 2021 William R. Cashen Service Award from the UAF Alumni Association. Russ graduated from the University of Alaska with a wildlife

management degree. His best memories are of playing hockey on the outdoor ice rink with the campus club team. He was reintroduced to UAF through a hockey reunion in 2005, when he traveled to Fairbanks from his home in Nassau, New York. He has returned every year since. He regularly attends Alaska Nanooks hockey games, both in Fairbanks and on the road. He is active in a variety of groups supporting the UAF hockey program and has been instrumental in preserving Nanooks' hockey history.



*Dr. Shirley Saucerman*

**Shirley Saucerman '69** — “I have fond memories of UAF and the wonderful people there. My brother, **Charles**



**Saucerman '72**, went home to be with the Lord in 2012. I did psychiatric residency training in Pennsylvania then returned home to Alaska in 1984. Since then I have enjoyed living in Anchorage.

Charles was accepted to the University of Hawaii Medical School at age 19. Shortly afterward, he was diagnosed with a mental illness. He later successfully studied 2 1/2 years of medical school. Mental illness disrupted his life. Food changed it!

My brother and I both graduated from UAF in biological sciences when Brina Kessel was heading the department. Our parents taught school in rural Alaska beginning in Angoon in 1958 and later in Seldovia, Teller, Portage Creek, Manokotak and Togiak.

I worked in Tecate, Mexico, in a small hospital delivering babies and in the ER before residency training.

I tell his story and how we have tremendous power over our health with the food we choose to eat. People may recover from many chronic illnesses, including bipolar disorders and schizophrenia, by using the principles described in my book, 'Recovery from Bipolar Disorders and Schizophrenia: My Brother's Story, Recovery of Others, Research and Model Programs from Around the World.' The digital book is available [here](#).

I specialize in nutritional psychiatry and lifestyle medicine.”

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# RECOVERY FROM BIPOLAR DISORDERS AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

SHIRLEY SAUCERMAN, M.D.

My Brother's Story, Recovery  
of Others, Research and Model  
Programs from around the  
World

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Charles Saucerman at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 16 years old

Many physicians are advocating a whole food, plant based lifestyle for the cardiovascular system, diabetes, autoimmune disorders and many other chronic diseases. In this book Dr. Saucerman shares her brother's story, the recovery of others and significant research and model programs from around the world. By using the principles described in this book people may recover from many chronic diseases including bipolar disorders and schizophrenia. Resources are included to help you get started, thrive and to connect with others.

*My beloved brother, Charles, was accepted to the University of Hawaii Medical School at age 19, then diagnosed with schizophrenia or a bipolar disorder for 44 years. He successfully studied two and a half years of medical school. Although he may not have always felt the depth of our family's love, many others could see what a beloved part of our family he was and through this love many others were touched. Greater love, patience, compassion, forgiveness, faith and hope were inspired through his life. Dr. Shirley Saucerman, M.D., Nutritional Psychiatry, Lifestyle Medicine, Anchorage, Alaska*



*This cover is from Dr. Shirley Saucerman's book.*



*Photo caption: Kim (right) and Marsha Francisco.*

**Kim Francisco '74** — “You’re so damn dumb you can’t even spell dog!’

‘I can too. G-O-D.’

The tense moment at the supper table unexpectedly turned into fits of laughter from my mother and siblings. My father smiled but just shook his head. I sat red-faced wondering what I had said that was so funny.

‘Dick, don’t worry,’ my mother said. ‘Kim is very smart, and Linda and I taught him to read. We’ll teach him to spell.’

I returned to the little classroom in the basement where my older sister ‘played’ student teacher, and I was forced to go through flash cards, spelling exercises and math.

I became an avid reader and wanted to be a writer. Spelling still is difficult, and I bless whoever created GrammarTech so Bill Gates could add it to Word.

I grew up in Des Moines, Iowa, listening to my father’s stories about spending World War II in the Navy in Alaska. My grandmother traveled to Fairbanks as a personal nurse by steamship and river boat in the early years of the 20th century. She wasn’t impressed — ‘just saloons and mud streets, filled with drunks.’ While my ambition growing up was to be a veterinarian, I also wanted to hunt and fish in Alaska. Had there been bucket lists in those days, Alaska would have been on mine. I read Service, London and Russell, along with everything else I could find.

During my senior year at Hoover High School, in Des Moines, I volunteered at a vet’s practice. I loved the work, but the veterinarian spent our time driving between farms telling me about the increasing paperwork load and difficulty he found in making his profession a lucrative one.



After spending my freshman year in a pre-vet program at Kansas State University, I found myself uncertain of much, except that I had to stay in college or I'd lose my draft deferment. I spent my sophomore year at Grandview Junior College thinking about the future. I applied to three universities with three different programs I was interested in. I assumed I'd be lucky if I were accepted by one, which would plot my life course. All three accepted me. A good friend also was accepted into the wildlife management program at the U of A. The decision was made; we started our first adventure, fishing and camping from Des Moines to Fairbanks.



*Kim Francisco visits Boca de Quadra in Misty Fjords, Tongass National Forest, in 1977.*

At the end of my 'first' senior year in 1973, I found myself short of credits needed to graduate. I was one semester away from a B.S. in wildlife management or a B.A. in history. I asked if I could get both. At that time, this was not an option. I was already a seasonal employee with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Following a third semester as a senior, I graduated in the spring of 1974. In the fall, I married Marsha Hein. We met while I was working and playing in the fall of '73.

The trans-Alaska oil pipeline was gearing up, and several positions opened up in ADFG on the Joint Fish and Wildlife Team. Our job was to measure and minimize the environmental impact of the pipeline. I landed one of the research positions working out of the Fairbanks office. Completion of the pipeline resulted in a transfer to Ketchikan, where I was an assistant area biologist for the Commercial Fisheries Division of ADFG for five years.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 resulted in several liaison positions between the state and federal governments. I was promoted to a fisheries biologist III and filled the position for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Region of the Commercial Fisheries Division of ADFG. After three years, I took a lateral transfer to become the Kuskokwim area biologist. Marsha and I spent 11 years living and working in Bethel and had many Alaska adventures.

On May 1, 1995, I retired from ADFG. At that time, ADFG biologists were in the 20-year retirement plan, due to our high mortality rate. Adventuresome jobs come with some risk. We bought a pickup and travel trailer and became homeless nomads in Canada and the U.S. In 1998, we bought a grass farm (that's bales of hay for cattle) in Iowa. We spent a remarkably busy 20 years volunteering and caring for our mothers. We continued traveling and added Belgium, Ireland, Iceland and Malaysia to our growing list of international locations.

As a biologist, when I wasn't out in the field, I was writing memos, job evaluations and reports. I managed to squeeze in a couple of magazine articles and sold a few pictures, but I just didn't have enough time to pursue writing the way I wanted. Once I retired, I started writing. I ended up with a draft the size of 'War and Peace.' Finally, after reading 'You Must Write a Book,' I found the formula I needed to write.

In 2018, my book, 'Alibi Mike and his Gang of Parasites on the State,' was published and is available on Amazon. This is a memoir of my first summer with ADFG, which was spent in Emmonak and traveling the Yukon River by boat from Tanana to Emmonak. This was before most villages had telephones or television. It was a wonderful summer.



# FLYING FISHERIES BIOLOGIST

Flying Experiences of an Alaskan Fisheries Biologist

Kim Francisco



*Kim Francisco's most recent book describes his aviation experiences.*

In 2019, 'Flying Fisheries Biologist' was also published by Kindle Direct Publishing and is available on Amazon. It is a

collection of my experiences with airplanes, from my first ride in a Ford Trimotor to my last survey counting reindeer and muskoxen on Nunivak Island. Each chapter has a photo of the type of airplane involved. The book is filled with field biology, plane ownership and flying. Pilots and nonpilots have enjoyed it.

I'm working on a sequel to 'Alibi Mike.' I'm working on some fiction but find that plotting is difficult. One of the advantages of memoirs is having lived the plot.

In July 2000, Iowa's Gov. Tom Vilsack appointed me to the state's Natural Resource Commission. I was reappointed by three more governors of both parties. My last term expired on April 30, 2021. I'm currently the longest-serving commissioner in history. While being a volunteer commissioner only required a few days a month, the change will free up my time. I can concentrate my natural resource management efforts on the farm, which has been restored as a prairie.

Finally, I'm very sorry to say that after I first wrote and submitted the original version of this article for class notes, my wife Marsha passed away on May 4, 2021."



*Jeremy Vermilyea (front) and Jake Poole meet in Arizona.*

**Jeremy Vermilyea '92** visited **Jake Poole '99** in Tucson, Arizona, recently, and they considered getting the “band” together again. Jeremy was on the UAF Alumni Association board when Jake was hired as the executive



director in 1997. Twenty-four years later, they are still hanging out together. “We may be a little older but we have not grown up!”

**Inuuteq Holm Olsen '94** is currently the minister plenipotentiary for Greenland at the Royal Danish Embassy in Washington, D.C. He graduated from UAF in 1994 with a B.A. in political science. [Read more](#) about what he has been up to since graduation.



**Brian Brubaker '96** — “I was a UAF student from 1989-1996. I have a lot of fun memories. Some of my favorites include: time with friends at Hot Licks, walking through the ice fog at minus 30 to get to Professor Gislason’s calculus class at 8 a.m. in Brooks with its ancient heat radiators, Saturday night shifts at the Wood Center front desk, protesting tuition hikes by sleeping overnight in the Butrovich lobby, and signing the Lathrop Hall asbestos tile for Gov. Hickel.



*Brian Brubaker. Photo by Genezaret Barron.*

I broke up with **Amber Hopkins '97** in the spring of '94 when I was passing her in the entryway of Constitution Hall. (We didn't have text messages then.) Big mistake! Fast forward six or seven years and I wised up. Now we've been hitched for 18 years, and it's working out pretty well so far.



We left Fairbanks in 2004, and now we are anchored down in Anchortown. You don't recognize all the super-fun people in the aisles of Fred Meyer so much here in the big city, but the weather's nice in the banana belt. Amber is an analyst programmer for the Alaska Child Support Services Division now, after 19 years working for UA and UAA. I'm a finance and logistics analyst for the Municipality of Anchorage's Office of Information Technology.

We love our future Nanook, Emily! She's a fourth grader at Aquarian Charter School. Amanda is her Girl Scout troop leader, and she's been making the most of pandemic learning. Emily likes Percy Jackson books, won her school spelling bee this year and loves playing Uno with me."



*Kyle Hopkins. Photo courtesy of the Anchorage Daily News.*

**Kyle Hopkins '00** received the 2021 Distinguished Alumnus Award from the UAF Alumni Association. Kyle earned a journalism degree from UAF and is now an investigative reporter and special projects editor for the Anchorage Daily News. He led a team that received the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for public service for a two-year investigation into sexual violence and the Alaska criminal justice system. Born in Sitka, he grew up in Kake, Juneau and Skagway. He lives in Anchorage with his wife and

fellow UAF alumna **Rebecca Palsha '04** and their two daughters. He previously worked for KTUU-Channel 2 in Anchorage, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, the Vallejo (California) Times-Herald and the St. Cloud (Minnesota) Times.





*Russ Kelly '02 is currently recording an album of original songs, many of which were written and performed during his time at UAF. Cartoona app image courtesy of Russ Kelly.*

**Russ Kelly '02** — “Upon graduation from UAF with a B.A. in political science and a minor in journalism, I was fortunate enough to spend some time as a reporter/producer at KUAC under the expert tutelage of Theresa Bakker and Libby Casey. It is difficult to imagine two journalists with more talent, integrity and heart than those two. I met them both while I was still a student and hosting my own talk show on KSUA. I covered politics, music and sports with fellow alumni **Dr. Mark Piedra '96**, **Chip Brookes '05**, **Hilary Fletcher '95**, **'02** and Jeff Stepp, among many.

Over the years, I kept in touch with my fantastic professors and instructors from UAF, including Brian O'Donoghue. Brian taught me a new level of attention to detail and the tenacity that continues to guide me. I was in Brian's first journalism class that revisited the details of the 'Fairbanks Four.' In the years following, I watched in awe as he and future classes would carry that story to the end. I was also lucky to learn from the most wise and wonderful **Sherry Simpson '86**, **'95**. She taught me the importance of being a professional while honoring our collective responsibility to be decent and kind. May she rest in peace and love!

Throughout my time at UAF, I immersed myself in the music scene and played many gigs at the Pub. Without that experience, I would not have had the confidence to continue playing, singing and writing songs over the years. Today, I am preparing to record an album of my own songs, many of which were written during those glorious days mingling with all the great and incredibly supportive musicians from within and around UAF, like Andy Anda, **Jessica Rachael Wood '00, '08, Ryan Woodard '04, Dan Angaiak '92, Willis Ferenbaugh '99, '09, Paul Krejci '89, '90, '93, '10, Shannon Scott Spring '01,** Beth Chrisman, Elton Ray, Sarah C. Hanson, **Max Wortman '96,** Marie Mitchell Monroe, Robin Dale Ford, Pat Fitzgerald, the great **Fred Weiss '78,** and the man, the legend, Leighton Nunez. Leighton will forever be remembered in the music and theater scene at UAF, and I'm blessed to have called him a close friend and musical mentor. He is missed dearly, but his music and craftsmanship lives on!





*From left, Leighton Nunez, Fred Weiss, Russ Kelly, Christopher Swaim (drums) and Jessica Rachael Wood perform at the Pub in 2002.*

My next career step was a direct product of the university's internship program with the Alaska State Legislature, which I participated in with fellow alum **Kim Ognisty '03**. I was hired by the Senate majority leader's office and would go on to work for a lieutenant governor and two governors. Throughout my time working in government, I often checked in with my mentor, former political science Professor Jonathan Rosenberg, who was single-handedly responsible for keeping me on track and rescuing me from the edge. Truthfully, I doubt I could have survived and navigated the challenging and often ludicrous environment of the Alaska Legislature if not for the brilliant instruction of professors Jonathan Rosenberg, Jerry McBeath and Jim Gladden. In a world of intense partisanship, I would always lean on their lessons about the value of exhaustive research, fact-checking and



balanced assessments of all perspectives. It served me well in my role as legislative director for the governor in the days when bipartisan cooperation and legislative action was not only possible but valued – and inherently necessary for the good of the state.

I spent five years in Juneau, where my wife, Ellen, and I were married and where our sons, Gus and Josh, were both born. In 2008, we moved to Washington, D.C. The last four years of my time working for the State of Alaska were spent in the governor's Washington, D.C., office under the tutelage of the legendary John Katz, director of federal policy, and conducting policy work on the Hill, in the agencies and at the White House.

In 2012, my family and I moved back to my native New England, where we settled here in the seacoast of New Hampshire. I worked six years for New England's largest electric utility company, Eversource, serving in a communications role on a \$1.6 billion clean energy project. In 2018, I started my own consulting business, Kelly Strategic Partners, specializing in communications and media relations, with a recent emphasis on social media. My goal is to help individuals, organizations and companies navigate the 'wild west' social media environment without spending a lot of money and effort, while avoiding the many inherent pitfalls of the various platforms.

Besides work and music, I have also returned to coaching youth sports and have enjoyed the chance to be back on the basketball court and baseball diamond. Both of our sons play for their respective schools.



*Russ celebrates with his sons Josh (left) and Gus (right) after a Little League baseball game in Exeter, New Hampshire.*

My time living and working in Alaska gave me a great appreciation for the incredible history and triumphs of Alaska Natives. Over the years, I played music and basketball with them, studied with them and worked on important public policy issues together with them. Alaska Natives understand better than anyone the importance of protecting the state's vast natural resources. Alaska is a magical and wonderful place because of its people. I hope that Alaska Natives can continue to play a large role in public policy so that their customs and culture can forever be appreciated and respected by all.

Where would I be without my experiences and great friends at UAF? I'd rather not think about that. Go Nanooks!"



*Photo caption: Somer Hahm (second from left) stands with Team Flying Geese after installing a quilt at the Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge barn.*

**Somer Hahm '08** — “The Far North Quilt Trail Project is my most recent artist-led endeavor of creative place-making. 2020 was an amazing year for my project. I received an individual artist award from the Rasmuson Foundation, support from the Alaska chapter of the Awesome Foundation and funding from the Alaska State Council of the Arts, in partnership with The Folk School Fairbanks, in the form of a community arts development grant. Currently, we have 18 barn quilts on the trail since its inception in July 2019, nine of which were painted and



registered on the trail by community members. The Far North Quilt Trail has resonated during the global pandemic. It's a citywide scavenger hunt for public art that can be done outside and in a social bubble! Igniting the eyes and minds of Fairbanksans to support, create and enjoy vibrant geometric paintings has been a success. [Follow along online](#) and on social media @thefarnorthquilttrailproject."



*Somer stands in front of the Rising Sun barn quilt at the Boreal Sun Charter School.*



*Photo caption: Ryan Muspratt holds a fish in 2019.*

**Ryan Muspratt '08** — “After graduating with a B.B.A. both in accounting and in management and organizations, while completing four years on the UAF hockey team, I moved to Anchorage. There, I worked at KPMG as an auditor and was able to earn my CPA license. After nearly five years at KPMG, I moved to Arctic Slope Regional Corp., where I held roles in both the Finance and Operations departments. In 2016, I was moved to the ASRC subsidiary Petro Star Inc., in the chief financial



officer role, and have been doing that ever since. Petro Star owns and operates two of the three operating refineries in Alaska, one of which is located in North Pole. Petro Star owns Sourdough Fuel in the Interior area, as well as North Pacific Fuel, which manages heating oil and dockside fuel operations in Valdez, Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. In my current capacity, I manage the Accounting, Financial Planning and Analysis, IT, Administration and Bulk Sales departments. Working at KPMG, ASRC and Petro Star has allowed me the opportunity to travel to all corners of this state and spend a fair amount of time where I went to university. I also have the benefit of working for fellow UAF alum **Charlie Kozak '97, '98**, chief financial officer of ASRC.

In my time since UAF, I have had the good fortune of working on a volunteer basis with Special Olympics Alaska, UAF School of Management advisory boards and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Recently, I was selected as an 'Alaska top 40 under 40' awardee.

I am newly married to my amazing wife Jenna. We pulled off a small pandemic wedding in Talkeetna. We are both passionate about living here in Alaska with the outdoor recreation and quality of life it provides.”



Ryan and Jenna Muspratt

**Amanda Byrd '13** — “I love meeting new people and I love telling stories. I am so excited that I get to do both and call it a job!



I have worked for UAF's Alaska Center for Energy and Power since it was created in 2008. During my time at ACEP, I have played many roles, including biomass energy researcher. That led me to my interdisciplinary master's degree in renewable energy science through the UAF College of Engineering and Mines and the School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences. My research focused on growing balsam poplars for a community-scale energy resource.



*Amanda Byrd visits a field of young balsam poplar trees on Elmendorf Air Force Base in 2011.*

Now I play a role that I have only ever dreamed of. I am the chief storyteller for ACEP. I share ACEP's research news through the weekly newsletter 'ACEP This Week'

and I make short films about ACEP's research and Alaska rural community energy and food security. I love that I get to work with remote rural Alaska communities and have made lasting connections with communities and people.



*Amanda films during the pandemic in 2020. Photo by Mike Mathers.*

For this role, I taught myself how to produce, film, direct, edit and publish short films and documentaries. UAF offers great documentary filmmaking classes through the Department of Journalism and Communications. I learned a lot of skills from Professor Rob Prince. But most was learned on the ground while I was filming in remote communities, including Kongiganak, Bethel, Igiugig, Kotzebue, Cordova and Tanana, and internationally in Canada and Iceland.

In addition to working for ACEP, I work for UAF's Office of Intellectual Property and Commercialization and Alaska Center ICE, helping to promote and share the successes of the UA community entrepreneurs and innovators through the department's newsletters and videos."





*Photo caption: Erica Moeller and Danke pause during a hike to Angel Rocks near Fairbanks.*

**Erica Moeller '18** — “I moved to Alaska in 2013 as an Army logistics officer and was stationed at Fort Wainwright. After leaving the Army, I decided UAF would be the perfect stepping stone to re-enter the civilian world. I pursued a bachelor’s in biology, with a concentration in ecology and evolutionary science. I graduated in 2018 and, despite

trying to find work in my new field, found myself gravitating back to logistics.

I worked for a local trucking company and was lucky enough to be hired into a federal civilian job on base, but nothing really called to me. Through a series of misadventures that have turned into blessings, I found myself starting the Roaming Root Cellar, a small boutique store that sells only Alaska-made and -grown food and gifts. Roaming Root has the mission of connecting our community with local goodness, year-round. We've been in business just over a year, and it's truly been an adventure. Over the last year, I grew the business from a bus (we started in a 23-foot, 1976 Bluebird International) into a 2,400-square-foot storefront in the Chena Pump Plaza. I have never worked a job that has required so much but given so much as this journey through entrepreneurship has.

Over the last eight years, Fairbanks and its community has become my home. My husband and I bought our house four years ago and have steadily increased the number of dogs and snow toys we own. When not working, we try to take full advantage of the beauty and wilderness around us by skiing, backpacking and biking our way through the seasons.”



Erica, her husband Andrew and their dogs Dax and Ava vacation at a friend's homestead.





*Photo caption: Abigail Steffen visits her hometown of Elgin, Illinois, in 2021.*

**Abigail Steffen '20** — “After graduating in December 2020, I spoke at the internationally attended National Council for Science and the Environment Drawdown Conference 2021. I presented on the development of Alaska climate policy, along with my research team, led by Amy Lovecraft at the Center for Arctic Policy at UAF.

This research was published by the Center for Arctic Policy in March 2021 and titled ‘Alaska’s Climate Change Policy Development.’ Since 2019, I have served on the Fairbanks



North Star Borough Joint Climate Change Task Force, which is working to create a climate action plan for the borough.

Graduating during a pandemic proved interesting, but I took the opportunity to reconnect with what inspired me to pursue environmental science in the first place: getting outside. I began fat biking, skiing and even watercoloring to capture the natural world I hold so dear.



*Abigail hikes in Gates of the Arctic National Park during an internship with the National Park Service in 2019.*

This summer I will be an Alaska Conservation Foundation Ted Smith intern with the Sitka Conservation Society. I will work on protecting the largest remaining temperate rainforest in the world. I will also promote climate policy on the local, state and national level and help to promote local and youth voices in the process.”



# In memoriam



*Carolayne Wallace and her husband, Chick Wallace, congratulate Col. Todd Wood, commander, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, during a redeployment and change of command ceremony at Fort Wainwright in 2014. Carolayne, a longtime university employee and advocate, including serving as a member of the UA Foundation Board of Directors, died April 30, 2021. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army.*

[View a list of alumni and friends whose passage has been shared with us since the previous issue of Aurora.](#)