

AURORA

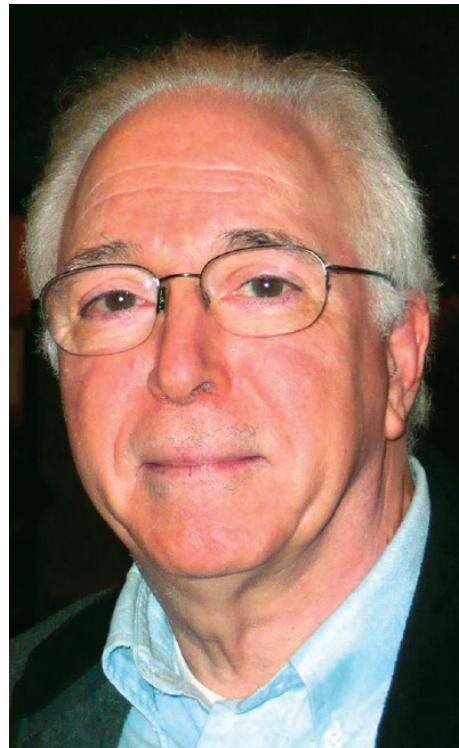
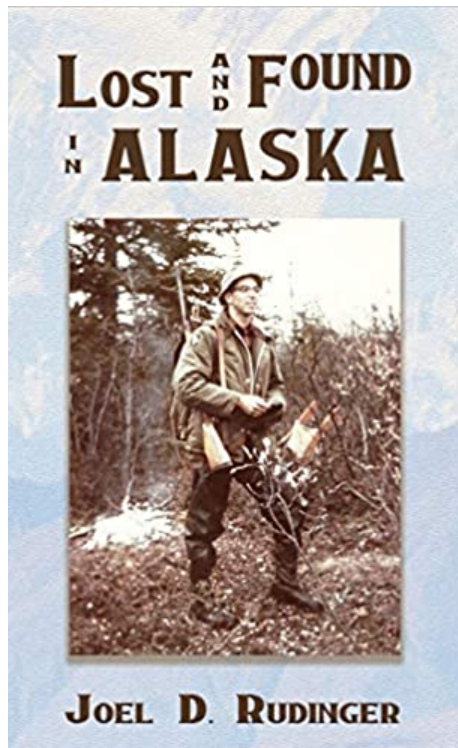
Class notes and in memoriam

Submissions received August-December 2020



Photos provided by alumni unless otherwise noted. Above: A solar halo arcs above the Troth Yeddha' campus in Fairbanks. UAF photo by JR Ancheta.

Joel Rudinger '64 has published a new book, "Lost and Found in Alaska." Joel was a UAF graduate student from 1960-1964. His latest book focuses on UAF during those years. Joel taught writing for many years at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He and his wife, Susan, live by Lake Erie in Huron, Ohio.



Joel Rudinger and the cover of his most recent book.



Neville Abbott Jacobs '65, '70 — “I matriculated at UAF in the mid-1950s. My maiden name was Neville Lee Abbott. I was born in San Francisco in May 1930. In the 1930s, my parents moved to Los Angeles, where we lived until my father was contacted by a friend in Anchorage, who wrote that the Alaska Road Commission needed a civil engineer with the particular kind of experience my dad had. My parents decided my dad should accept the offer of the job as assistant district engineer with the Alaska Road Commission.

“In 1953, my father became involved with a mining venture at Nome, and we moved there for the summer. I had become acquainted with a family originally from Diomedes Island, who presented a pageant drama of

Eskimo dances and demonstrations of their culture. I had volunteered to pull the curtain with the stage crew. Through this we became close friends. They invited me to travel with them by umiak to Diomedes. We were gone nearly a month, and it was a profound experience to live in a traditional manner that was changing rapidly and was a motivation for my continuing on to study anthropology, and the richness of living with Indigenous people at various times has enriched my life.

“I married Henry (Harry) W. Waterfield in 1954. He was then attending Colorado School of Mines. We returned to Alaska in 1955 and decided we would both go to UAF. When I returned to UAF, my full name was Neville Lee Abbott Waterfield. Harry and I attended semesters as finances permitted. He completed his degree in mining engineering in 1961. Harry and I divorced in 1963. I finished my B.A. in anthropology in 1964 and moved to Hawaii, where I attended the University of Hawaii grad school in anthropology for a year. Eventually, I returned to Fairbanks and UAF, and was accepted into grad school. I completed my M.A. in anthropology and journalism.

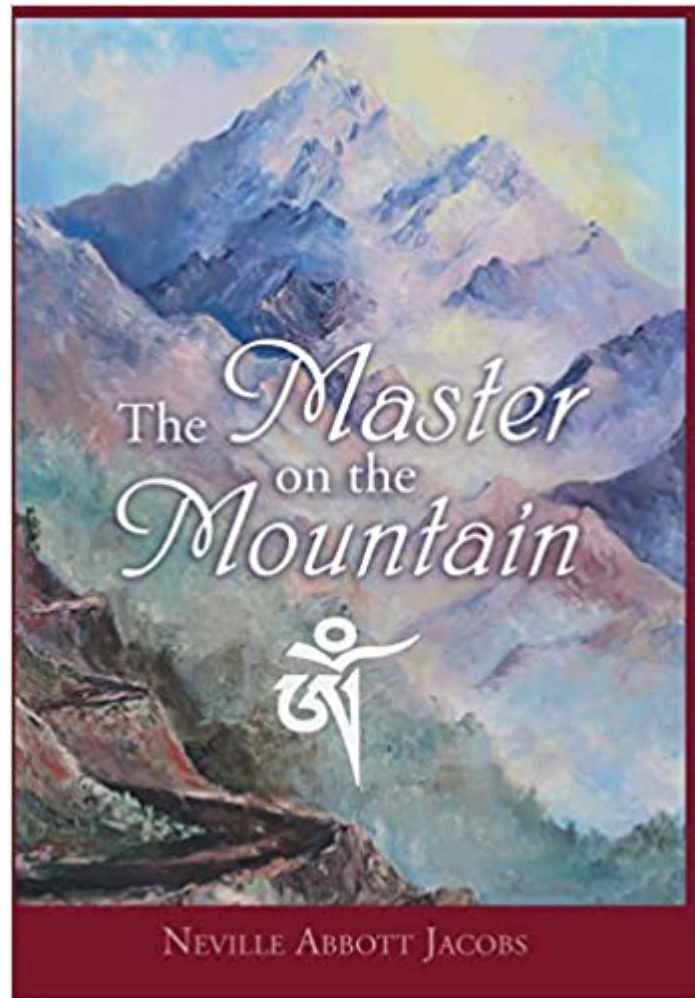
“I produced a series of radio shows for KUAC based on interviews with early pioneers and Indigenous peoples. I also added several interviews to the archives. This was not done for academic credit, but I always felt it contributed to my work in both anthropology and journalism.

“In 1968, I married Robert Jacobs (Bob) who was a pilot flying for Interior Airways. He had flown Bush for Alaska Airlines out of Nome for many years. Then the Distant Early Warning Line from Alaska’s west coast to the Atlantic. Then the North Slope for the period of exploration and oil development. His colleagues told me that the North Slope was known as ‘Jake’s Playground.’ He was an outstanding Arctic pilot.

“In addition to my academic studies, I’ve been a landscape painter in oil, watercolor and acrylic, with my first one-person exhibit in Anchorage in 1952. My work has been exhibited in galleries in Fairbanks, Anchorage and elsewhere and hangs in collections in many parts of the world, as well as the Alaska State Museums’ permanent collection. In Fairbanks, a steel plaque is in a concrete monument at the entrance to the riverboat *Nenana*, and it contains a painting of the riverboat that I created at a laboratory studio in Seattle. At St. Michael’s Church on First Avenue, they have a stained glass window I did, which commemorates the earliest hospital in Fairbanks. Presently my work is available through Well Street Gallery in Fairbanks.

“I have extended my range of interest to Tibetan studies and have made five trips to India to visit a community in India popularly known as Little Lhasa, Dharamsala. I published a book about my interests and studies with the Tibetan political and spiritual leader of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama, as well as with other outstanding scholars in the Tibetan tradition. The title is ‘The Master

on the Mountain,' published by Archway, a branch of Simon and Schuster.



“My husband Bob died at 97 in 2015. We were married 47 years. In 1968, we bought a house on Sixth Avenue in Fairbanks, where I continue to reside today.”



Photo caption: Dave Olson makes friends in Papua New Guinea.

Dave Olson '72 and Patti Olson '70 — “I am currently retired, but I am still active with numerous projects. I serve on the board of a ministry that serves the people of Haiti, work with a local search and rescue team, serve our country with emergency communications capabilities, and manage a weekly Zoom meeting Bible study. My wife, Patti, works part time as a tour director and will be taking a group to Alaska in June 2021.

“After graduation, we lived in Anchorage until 1986, when economic conditions forced me to close my small consulting business. We moved to Washington state, where we resided until moving to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, our current home. Our two children were born in Alaska and are now married and living in Washington state and Colorado. We have four grandchildren.

“At the age of 55, I sold my partnership in an engineering firm in Seattle. Then my wife and I began to travel. We volunteered to work with Christian radio projects internationally. Over the last 20 years, we traveled to 10 countries. In nine years, we installed transmitters and satellite equipment, and maintained high-power shortwave transmitting equipment. Our journeys took us to Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Fiji, Guam, Mexico and Benin in West Africa. We found living cross-culturally to radically change your worldview. While our traveling days are coming to an end, I did travel to Haiti in March 2020 to perform an electrical study for the Beraca Medical Center. Our trip was perfectly timed, as Haiti closed all airports the day after we returned to the U.S. I will be volunteering my time with the design of a new power generation facility and other upgrades to serve the hospital campus.



Dave trains operators on automation software in Benin.

“Patti wrote a book chronicling our experiences living cross-culturally, which is available from Amazon. Look for ‘Frogs in the Loo,’ by Patti Olson. I would love to hear from other members of the class of 1969, especially those from the engineering program.”

(Editor’s note: Dave studied with the class of 1969 but his graduation was delayed until 1972 by some credit-transfer issues.)



Dave and Patti celebrate on their 50th wedding anniversary cruise.

Craig Dougherty '87 will retire in 2021 after 21 years as superintendent of Sheridan County School District No. 2 in Wyoming. Craig began his education career in 1983 and worked as a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent in Alaska, Montana and Wyoming. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Arizona

State University and a master's in teaching from UAF. Read more about [Craig's career](#).



Craig Dougherty

Jeff Roach '87 — “My wife, Sherilyn, and I have three children, Amber, Daniel and Victoria, who now have families of their own. My family moved to Alaska from Michigan when I was a child. We lived in Talkeetna and Lake Minchumina. I joined the Alaska Army National Guard after graduating high school from Centralized Correspondence Study (Juneau, Alaska) in 1981.



Sherilyn and Jeff Roach enjoy the view in Thompson Pass, near Valdez, Alaska.

“I attended UAF from 1984 to 1987 after completing an A.A.S. in agriculture at Mat-Su Community College and UAA in May 1984. I met and married Sherilyn Siegmund while she was completing her teaching certification at UAF. I graduated from UAF in May 1987 with a B.S. in natural resource management. While in college, I worked summers with Alaska State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service.

“After college, Sherilyn and I moved to Eagle, Alaska, for four years. Sherilyn served as a school teacher (fourth- to 12th-grade math and science), and I worked as a park

ranger with the National Park Service at Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

“We moved to Tok, Alaska, where we lived for four years. Sherilyn served as a school teacher at Tok School (seventh- to 12th-grade math and science), and I served as an outdoor recreation planner with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management on the Fortymile Wild and Scenic River. While in Tok, I served as a volunteer firefighter, EMT I/II and ambulance crew member. I was also appointed to the Eastern Interior Subsistence Advisory Committee by the U.S. secretary of the interior. I volunteered to serve on the Fortymile Caribou Herd Management Planning Team, helping to develop a management plan for the Fortymile Caribou Herd.

“We then returned to Fairbanks, where Sherilyn served as a school teacher (University Park Elementary’s gifted and talented program teacher) and ended her teaching career after five years teaching high school math at West Valley High School, totaling 25 years of public school teaching in Alaska. Sherilyn also played viola for the Fairbanks Symphony for more than 20 years. I took a position with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities as an area planner. At DOTPF, I served as an area planner, transportation planner and transportation planning manager. I ended a 20-year career with the State of Alaska as the airport manager at Fairbanks International Airport on my 55th birthday.

“While living in Fairbanks, I volunteered for numerous organizations, including the KUAC Advisory Committee, Veterans of Foreign Wars (numerous volunteer positions, culminating as post commander), Association of the United States Army, Army Aviation Association of Alaska, Rotary International exchange student parent (three exchange students), Fairbanks Chapter Ducks Unlimited, Tanana Valley Sportsmen’s Association and the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce.



Jeff Roach volunteers at a KUAC poster signing on March 2, 2013.

“I served on three deployments with the U.S. Army. I served as the commander of a public affairs detachment in central Europe during the conflict in Bosnia. I served as the

operations officer for a U.S. Army infantry brigade at Kandahar Air Base in Afghanistan for 15 months, where I received a Bronze Star and the Combat Action Badge. I then served as the commander of an aviation battalion task force and commander of Camp Bondsteel Airfield in Kosovo. I also served in aviation units deployed to Honduras and Haiti to support hurricane relief efforts. In 2016, I served as the exercise director for Khan Quest 2016, a multinational partnership-for-peace exercise in Mongolia.



Jeff Roach sits at the controls of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in Pristina, Kosovo.

“To enhance my ability to serve during disasters and community emergencies, I completed more than 40 Federal Emergency Management Agency courses and received the FEMA Emergency Management Professional certification.

“Volunteerism and service to my community are very important to me. I also consider myself a lifelong learner. I continue to take classes through organizations like the UAF Osher Lifelong Learning program, Fifty Forward, the American Association of Airport Executives, the Airport Council International-North America and other service organizations.

“After retiring from the State of Alaska on my 55th birthday, I was offered a position as the assistant vice president for strategic planning at the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority, where I oversaw strategic planning for the airport authority, as well as airport grant management, the airspace and noise control programs, and development of the capital improvement program.

“In March 2020, John C. Tune Airport (the MNAA general aviation reliever airport for the Nashville International Airport and the busiest general aviation airport in Tennessee) was severely damaged by a category III tornado. I was asked to oversee the development of the John C. Tune Airport Redevelopment Plan. As the plan was completed, the MNAA offered me the opportunity to implement the plan and lead JWN into the future. After

two years as the assistant vice president at MNAA, I transitioned to the executive director at the John C. Tune Airport.

“I served 37 years in the Alaska National Guard, from the rank of private to colonel, starting as an aircraft mechanic, then becoming a helicopter pilot and aviation officer. Because of my desire to continue to learn, I was offered the opportunity to serve as a public affairs officer, editor of The Alaskan (the Alaska National Guard magazine), the operations officer of an infantry brigade serving in combat in southern Afghanistan, a military planner and many other roles outside my primary career field. I also commanded at all levels, from detachment through brigade. It has been my honor to serve.

“Anyone considering studying at UAF has some great times ahead of them. The courses are interesting, the faculty and staff are friendly, and the campus environment is awesome.”

“My fondest memory as a student at UAF is of the great friends that I’ve made. I still run into many friends from my days as a UAF student. I met and married my best friend, Sherilyn, at UAF. Being a part of the UAF community has encouraged me to stay involved in the alumni program and other UAF volunteer opportunities.

“The natural resource management program inspired me to attend UAF. I was looking for a degree program that would lead to a career that would allow me to work outdoors. My natural resource management degree did just that, providing me the opportunity to work for state and federal agencies in land-use management and planning in some of Alaska’s most interesting natural areas, including the Chugach National Forest, Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve and the Fortymile Wild and Scenic River.

“Anyone considering studying at UAF has some great times ahead of them. The courses are interesting, the faculty and staff are friendly, and the campus environment is awesome. No matter what your course of study, you should open your aperture to take in all UAF has to offer. As a student, I worked for different departments, which allowed me to experience other UAF programs and meet new people outside of my field. I also participated in intramural sports and student functions as my schedule allowed. The opportunities truly are limitless.”

Editor’s note: Jeff is a UAF Alumni Association lifetime member and a recipient of the 2014 UAF Distinguished Alumnus Award.



Jeff Roach visits with actors Ted Danson (above, left), Kristen Bell and Tim Blake Nelson (above, right) during filming in Alaska for the 2012 movie “Big Miracle.” The movie was based on the 1988 effort to free whales trapped in sea ice near Utqiagvik.

Karen Gaborik '91 — “I attended UAF from 1987-1992, graduating with a B.A. in communications and a type A teaching certificate. I lived on campus all four years, in both Lathrop and Wickersham halls. During my time as a UAF student, I was a resident advisor and student ambassador. I was on the rifle team from 1987-1991, where I became an all-American. At commencement, I was chosen as a student speaker.





Clockwise from top left: Karen Gaborik stands outside Wickersham Hall as a senior; Karen (left) and her roommate and best friend Amanda Findlater strike a goofy pose; Students play a hacky sack game in front of Lathrop Hall; Karen, at far left, joins movie night with friends on third floor Lathrop Hall.

“After graduating from UAF, I attended UAA to earn my Master of Education degree in special education.



Karen Gaborik graduates from UAF in 1991.

"I taught in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District from 1996-2002. I earned my administrative certificate from UAA while teaching at North Pole Middle School. From 2002-2012, I was an administrator at

Lathrop High School, first as the assistant principal for five years and then as the principal for five years.

“In 2012, I was awarded the Alaska Principal of the Year Award. I became the assistant superintendent of secondary schools and served there from 2012-2014.

“After earning my doctorate from Argosy University and superintendent certificate from UAA, I became the Fairbanks superintendent and served there from 2014–2021. I was awarded many awards along my career path, including the Personalized Learning Pioneer Award 2018, Alaska Superintendent of the Year 2019 and the Alaska After-School Network Champion Award 2020. I will retire on June 30, 2021, with 26.3 years working in the school district.

“Once I retire, I plan to take a year off from formal employment to spend time with family and friends. I also plan to pursue my interests in quantum physics, the relationship between energy and matter, and integrated medicine. Additionally, there will be least a couple long-term silent meditation retreats in the first year of retirement. I’ve been able to do a couple short silent retreats each year for the past few years and want to extend that experience.

“In terms of my career: Leadership training and mentoring is my passion. There are so many silver linings within COVID-19 related to evolving the public education system

in this country. My long experience inside the system suggests that initiating significant change in terms of how we approach teaching and learning might be best accomplished from a more distant vantage point. Maintaining our human connection in the wake of exponential technological change will be both the challenge and the celebration in the coming decade(s)."



Photo caption: Merav Ben-David takes a break with her dog, Chilkoot, near a creek in Wyoming.

Merav Ben-David '96 became the Democratic candidate for a Wyoming seat in the U.S. Senate after winning the August 2020 primary election. Merav lost the November 2020 general election to her Republican opponent, Wyoming's U.S. Rep. Cynthia Lummis. The Senate seat was held by Republican Sen. Mike Enzi, who retired.

Merav, originally from Israel, arrived in Fairbanks in 1990 and earned a Ph.D. in wildlife management at UAF. She studied how the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill affected river otters in Prince William Sound.

Merav, who became a U.S. citizen in 2009, is a professor at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. She was named a fellow of The Wildlife Society in 2017. She is the editor-in-chief of Wildlife Monographs, one of the society's serial publications.



Chad Hutchison '02 has been named the University of Alaska's director of state relations by interim President Pat Pitney, effective Jan. 4. Chad had worked as majority counsel for the Alaska Senate since 2013.

Chad was born and raised in Fairbanks. He graduated from UAF with a Bachelor of Business Administration. After earning a law degree from Gonzaga University, he went to work at Cook, Schuhmann and Groseclose in Fairbanks.



Photo caption: Jeff Jacobs plants trees for a restoration project in eastern Oregon with his daughter, Rowan.

Jefferson Jacobs '03 — “After graduating from UAF with a master’s in wildlife ecology (**Doug Schamel '74** was my advisor), I worked a little over a year for the National Park Service as the biological inventory coordinator for the Arctic parks. I married my wife, Carla Delfino, on a rooftop in the Tanana River valley, and then we took a year off and traveled, spending nearly half a year in my wife’s home country of Argentina. Eventually, we moved to the big island of Hawaii, where I worked as an endangered species biologist. It was exciting work. I was doing a wide variety of field work, including designing monitoring protocols for Hawaiian hoary bats.



Jeff Jacobs clips the feathers of peregrine falcon nestlings to analyze for mercury contamination during his graduate studies.

“In 2008, we finally settled in Bend, Oregon, where I got a job with the Oregon Natural Desert Association leading volunteers on various restoration projects. Our daughter, Rowan, was born in 2009. Ever since then, I have become increasingly involved in riparian restoration, particularly biomic restoration that collaborates with beavers to

restore riparian areas in eastern Oregon. My daughter, Rowan, is my best field help. She will get up at 4:30 a.m. and work 13-hour days with me. She can explain what a keystone species is and at least a half-dozen ways that beavers can help save the world.”

Jeff was recently honored by Oregon’s State Land Board for his coordinating volunteer efforts for riparian restoration. Read more about [the award](#).



Jeff Jacobs climbs Panorama Mountain just north of Cantwell.

Maria Luna '15 was admitted to the Global Field Program at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, in summer 2020. In her Earth Expeditions: Connected Conservation course, Maria completed a conservation campaign project in which she and fellow graduate students teamed up with the Reef HQ Aquarium and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in Australia to design a curriculum that will

complement their Reef Guardian program. The online program helps foster marine stewardship, connects participants to nature and focuses on action-based ocean conservation. Maria is a former aviculturist and dolphin trainer at Discovery Cove in Orlando, Florida, and currently lives in Miami.



Left: Maria Luna swims with a dolphin at Discovery Cove in Orlando, Florida. Right: Maria holds a reindeer calf at UAF.



In memoriam



Professor Emeritus Terrence Cole, left, died in Fairbanks on Dec. 12, 2020. Here, he reacts to remarks made by his twin brother, Dermot, during a lecture at Schaible Auditorium in 2018. UAF photo by JR Ancheta.

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

