

Center Stage

Humanities prof follows unique path

By Ned Rozell
managing editor

She wakes every morning before 5, pulls on her bunny boots, and takes her dogs for a walk. Oblivious to freezing cold, she scurries between campus buildings with no winter coat. When the hot water heater in her Salcha cabin balks at 25 below, she doesn't fret: she heats up bath water on the stove.

A UAF instructor of English and humanities since 1982, Doris Ann Bartlett is perhaps better known as an eccentric, unconventional teacher than the daughter of E.L. "Bob" Bartlett, Alaska's first senator and a leader in Alaska's statehood battle.

'Some teachers lecture to you — she teaches you,' says a student. 'She tries to get inside you, to open you up.'

Affectionately known as "D. A." to her students, she can frequently be seen zipping between classes coatless, with her hands full of books. "I can get from the library to Gruening at 50 below, no problem," she says. "I keep telling myself, 'I'm not cold, I'm feeling very warm.'" She says the Alaskan winter caught her off guard this semester. "That cold spell we had was a little early. I put my coat on — wimped out."

D. A.'s classes break conventional rules of rigid, by-the-text instruction. "I have an outline of what to do in class, but if anybody brings up something else that's re-

lated to what we're studying, I go with that," she says. "There's always so much to say it doesn't matter which point you start in on."

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Times and politics have changed greatly



D. A. Bartlett

since her father was one of the most influential and popular politicians in the state. He would tour the state in small aircraft, shaking hands with and showing interest in everyone he met. He amazed people with his ability to remember small details they had discussed with him months earlier.

"When I meet anybody who has been here since those days, I expect them to know him — they generally do," D. A. says. Bob

Bartlett served as an Alaskan senator from 1958 until his death in 1968. D. A.'s mother, Vide, was a UA Regent until her death in 1976.

As a 10 year-old living in Juneau, D. A. walked from door to door handing out picture postcards of her father, who was campaigning to be the Alaska delegate to Congress. Through the years, she traveled with her father as he campaigned from town to town.

In November, 1955, through February, 1956, she served as "research specialist" at the Alaska Constitutional Convention that was held in UAF's Constitution Hall. The job required her to study other states' constitutions, find good ideas and suggest they be incorporated into the Alaska Constitution. "I'd always tell them (the writers of the Constitution) what to do," she recalls. "I was 21, I had all the answers."

D. A., who is 55, chooses a rustic lifestyle, and says Alaska is the only place she is "fully alive." Her cabin has running water, but no toilet. "My father thought it (the indoor toilet) was the greatest technological improvement of the 20th century," she says. "And here I am backing out of it."

She's a sucker for stray dogs and cats, who seem to gravitate to her home. She says she'll take in "anything that comes to the door with a fur coat and says, 'Oh, I don't have a home.'" Four dogs and four cats lounge on the couch in D. A.'s 20-by-20-foot cabin while they await her return from school every day.

She tries to give away stray dogs and cats before they are around long enough to wrap themselves around her heartstrings. I took in two strays a year ago and found homes for them," she says. "Got lucky that time."