

# Extra+ Credit



Outdoor Adventures sponsors trips around Alaska for students, faculty and staff. This ice-climbing day trip was taken last spring to Dragonfly Creek near Denali National Park and Preserve.

James Smith, a wildlife biology major and student ambassador, sets his pick in a frozen waterfall as Stephanie Walden, a fellow wildlife biology major, waits below.



Find out how to start your own outdoor adventure at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).

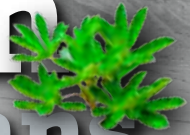


# AURORA

Out of the Ashes

# Rebirth

in the Aleutians



UNIVERSITY of ALASKA FAIRBANKS



Alumnus  
inside

# Letters

Dear editor,

Re: "Dateline Iraq" spring 2010

I enjoyed this story. It brought back memories of patriots from past U of A classes. I was reminded that the class of 1960 had a number of career military graduates. Pete Weimer, the Bartholmew brothers, Joseph Baldwin, Paul Hunter and me. So long ago and so many great patriots. There were others whose names have eluded me over the years. The university can be proud of these men and women.

Robert W. Browning

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Dear People,

I'm a busy guy. So I hadn't read the copy of *Aurora* you sent me yet. Since I had now two items from you, namely the magazine and a survey, I picked or rather retrieved *Aurora* from the compost heap that is my kitchen table.

It's nice. That's what we said in creative writing class when we hadn't read our homework. So, the very best thing in the magazine was the back cover.

My house is overflowing with books, more than I will ever read. So I subscribe to 12 magazines, get a dozen or so freebies like *Aurora*. I don't read articles in depth unless they touch on my personal interests. I read *Scientific American* (about 50 percent of it), I flip through *Bicycling* and various other mags. I read *Smithsonian* 75 percent. You get the picture. I clip out articles for reference and toss the rest. I'll file *Aurora* intact for now.

Now the gripe.

Why, why, why are you printing on 70-lb. glossy card stock? This is extravagant and wasteful. The university is always crying poverty and then putting out a nonrecycled or recyclable deluxe out-of-state printed FREEBIE? You jack tuition, yanked my senior free tuition and you have the @#\$%^ to print a full-color glossy giveaway!?!?

John D. Corning

*Editor's note: Previous issues of Aurora were printed on paper made from 35 percent postconsumer waste. This issue is 10 percent postconsumer waste, a change that represents a cost saving of about 35 percent. (The cover continues to be printed on cover stock, not card stock.) We try hard to balance our fiscal and environmental responsibilities. For paperless, e-mail delivery of Aurora, subscribe at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).*

*The aurora borealis dances in the winter night skies over the Fairbanks campus.*

Dear *Aurora* magazine folks,

I just have to send you a note to tell you how very impressive the alumni magazine has become!! This latest issue is beautifully done and most interesting. Thank you!

I do note that having been a sort-of student in the '60s, I am such an antique fossil that there seems to be little news of my cohorts during those long-ago years.

I absolutely loved my years at the U of A at Fairbanks! A great student I was not, but a full participator I surely was ... treading the boards with Lee Salisbury's dramas, imagining myself a literary light with my favorite English classes and professors, learning to ski on the old ski hill, managing student government with pals, monitoring the annual mudball game, presiding as waitress at dear Dr. and Mrs. Wood's parties, doing a fair amount of partying on my own, and capably representing the U at Tommy's now and then.

The staff and the faculty were all marvelous and memorable ... and in those days the whole school was so small, we were all one big family it seemed, and I made long-lasting friends!

Since marrying my roving engineering husband in 1963, we've lived all over the world while capably managing projects in developing countries for an American engineering firm. And there, too, we learned an enormous lot about how people live, and again we made lots of wonderful friends.

We're now retired, more or less, in Colorado and contemplating what to do next. Again, congrats on a fine alumni magazine.

Cheers!

Susy Collins

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Dear editor,

Re: "Dateline Iraq" spring 2010

The comments about the coin are incorrect. That is not a "heart with a lightning bolt." That is a taro leaf with a lightning bolt. If I remember correctly, the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions both had the taro leaf insignia, were formed out of Hawaii before WWII, and both performed well in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. The taro leaf was split by the lightning bolt on the insignia of the 25th to emphasize the "Tropic Lightning" name of the division, while the 24th stayed plain. The 24th was a stellar performer in Desert Shield/Storm. It was re-flagged as 3rd ID, and is in Iraq doing a fine job there. The 25th ID has performed well in both Iraq and Afghanistan. I wish that the media would do a little research on the history of the units they embed with. I have a lot of respect (usually) for embeds, but please think of the units as well. Other than that, nice story.

Darrell Henry

# AURORA

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America's Arctic University

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## 1970s

Federal grants lead to the establishment of the Alaska Sea Grant program.

ASG research includes biodegradability of crude oil in seawater, and salmon ranching, which helps fishery managers rehabilitate decimated salmon stocks.

## 1980s

ASG Marine Advisory Program creates training courses designed to reduce high rate of death and injury among commercial fishermen. MAP leads formation of Alaska Marine Safety Education Association.

ASG-MAP is part of the first response to alleviate effects of *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, including helping protect hatcheries and estuaries from encroaching oil.

## 2000s – today

Climate change affects Alaska's coastal communities and marine ecosystems. ASG-MAP works directly with communities to respond to the challenges.

ASG research helps fisheries managers ensure the sustainability of the oceans. New seafood products and technologies help seafood industry stay competitive.

ASG-MAP works with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to help Ghana, Senegal and Costa Rica reduce marine mammal bycatch in commercial fisheries.

## 1990s

World markets for Alaska salmon nearly collapse amid competition from cheaper, farmed salmon. ASG-MAP workshops help fishermen and seafood processors improve the quality of Alaska's wild salmon.



Learn more about the Alaska Sea Grant program at <http://seagrants.uaf.edu/>.

Photo of salmon by Thomas Kline, Prince William Sound Science Center.

## Scientists: Asteroid crushed the Cretaceous

In the March 2010 issue of the journal *Science*, a research group that included UAF scientist Michael Whalen reaffirmed the recently challenged theory that an asteroid ended the age of the dinosaurs. The team of scientists compiled a wide swath of evidence that struck a definitive blow in the ongoing battle over what killed the dinosaurs. Scientists first proposed the asteroid impact theory of dinosaur mass extinction 30 years ago.

The 1991 discovery of a massive crater at Chicxulub, in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, strengthened that hypothesis.

The Chicxulub crater is more than 120 miles wide — about the distance between Fairbanks and the Arctic Circle — and scientists believe it was created when an asteroid more than six miles wide crashed into Earth 65 million years ago. The cataclysmic impact was a million times more powerful than the largest nuclear bomb ever tested, and it triggered massive earthquakes, atmospheric discharge and oceanic upheaval. The ensuing mass extinction ended both the reign of the dinosaurs and the Cretaceous Period, which gave way to the Paleogene Period.



Painting by Donald E. Davis courtesy of NASA.

## UA installs 13th president

Patrick K. Gamble became UA's 13th president in June, and has since met with many groups and individuals across the state, both within and outside the UA System. He says he'll work to enhance the quality of education for all of the university's students and increase public support for the system. He also plans to promote the university's role in Alaska-focused research and economic development.



Former UA President Mark Hamilton established a strong base for the future with his focus on accountability, transparency and responsiveness to state needs, says Gamble. "Updating the university's strategic plan, harmonizing it with the academic master plan and bringing home an effective budget that supports both are among my short-term goals."



Learn more about President Gamble at [www.alaska.edu/pres/](http://www.alaska.edu/pres/).

## Taking nutrition off the road

Less soda and stress, more water and workouts. These and other solutions were part of community-based projects undertaken by nearly two dozen rural and Alaska Native students as part of the Rural Nutrition Services program. The 12-credit course trains students to work with their communities to tackle health problems in rural Alaska. Students can use the training to enhance current employment, improve future employability in fields such as community health and tribal

administration, or to prepare for a bachelor's degree program. The Rural Nutrition Services program is offered through the Interior-Aleutians Campus and is sponsored by a grant from the USDA. Areas served by the most recent group of students included Allakaket, Anaktuvuk Pass, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Fort Yukon, Nenana, Seldovia, Tanacross, Tok and Unalaska, as well as rural community members living in Fairbanks.

## Talk to me

Students in the School of Education are learning to harness computer technology to teach children with disabilities. Nonspeaking children can use computerized devices to communicate with their teachers; many applications are specifically designed to help students with autism. The devices can also be shipped to rural students. This assistive technology — and the Pelican cases they travel in — was funded by a grant from the Technology Advisory Board, which allocates the funds from the student technology fee.



Nonverbal students can use applications like Proloquo2Go on iPod Touch devices to communicate more easily.

## CAMPUS BRIEFS

**THROUGH MID-DECEMBER, VISITORS TO THE UA MUSEUM OF THE NORTH** can surround themselves with dozens of butterflies, including Zebra longwings and bright-yellow sulphurs, in a 200-square-foot mesh enclosure. Lucky visitors might even have a butterfly land on their nose. Entrance to the butterfly pavilion is free with museum admission.

**A \$435,000 GRANT FROM THE POLLOCK CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTER**, matched with \$180,000 from the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, will allow School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences scientists to study declines and variability in Western Alaska king salmon runs for two years.

**A SECTION OF THE ARCTIC OCEAN SEAFLOOR HOLDING VAST STORES OF FROZEN METHANE** is showing signs of instability and widespread venting of the powerful greenhouse gas. The discovery was made by a research team led by International Arctic Research Center scientists Natalia Shakhova and Igor Semiletov.



Listen to Shakhova discuss the finding at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).

## ATHLETICS

### Saint Kitts transplant flourishes in Fairbanks

It's tough to miss Nashorn "Nash" Maynard around the Fairbanks campus. He is 6 feet 5 inches tall, is equipped with a friendly grin and has a slight accent. Maynard traveled north from a small sovereign state in the tropical West Indies: Saint Kitts. He was willing to leave the heat and tolerate temperatures far below zero in order to play Nanook basketball and pursue a degree in computer science.



His skills in the classroom and on the court haven't gone unnoticed. He notched 13.7 points per game for the 2009 – 2010 season, earning team MVP and an honorable mention on the Great Northwest Athletic Conference all-conference team. With the goal of becoming a computer programmer, Maynard also hit the books, earning GNAC academic all-conference honors in 2008 – 2009. And he won the 2010 Harris Shelton Spirit of Competition award, given to the UAF student-athlete with the best "never-say-quit" attitude. His final year of athletic eligibility ends this season.

Although the transition from palm trees to permafrost hasn't been easy, Maynard is glad he made the trip to Fairbanks because of the people he's met and all his experiences. "The friends I made here, I wouldn't give that up," he said. "I have a story I can tell my grandchildren one day."

### Can't live without snow? Study glaciers in summer

Many glaciers and ice sheets are changing fast in the warming climate, and figuring out how to track those changes is hard. Nearly 30 students pursuing Ph.D.s in glaciology learned the latest techniques at UAF's first-ever International Summer School in Glaciology. The students — from 21 universities and 12 countries — started in McCarthy, Alaska, in June, and finished up in Fairbanks. Parts of the course included a public workshop — "Snow, Ice, Permafrost and Water in a Warming Climate" — and a tour of the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory's permafrost research tunnel in Fox.



Photo by Regine Hoek.

### Arsenic salad



UAF business and pre-dental major Jeff Bue's family is careful not to drink the arsenic-laced water from their household well. However, Bue wondered if arsenic, so common in Interior wells, makes its way to the family dinner plate via the garden.

Bue's experiment, which showed that arsenic does indeed transfer to heads of lettuce in substantial amounts, took first place in the UAF undergraduate research symposium in April. Bue was awarded a \$2,500 credit to his UAF account.



Comment on any of these stories at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).

## Fake patient, real training

**P**ity the paramedic students at UAF's Community and Technical College.\* They have to deal with SimMan 3G, who might at any time have a seizure or a heart attack, squirt blood, pass out or start babbling incoherently. Not that they're complaining. This state-of-the-art patient simulator, the only one of its kind in Alaska, opens up endless possibilities for paramedic students to experience real-life simulations in various locations and settings.

The simulator looks and feels very human-like, and it mimics about 10,000 medical symptoms a real person might have. SimMan 3G is also programmed to respond to more than 100 drugs commonly used by medical professionals.

Operated by a nearby instructor through a wireless laptop computer, SimMan 3G is as close as it gets to working on a real person.

"It's a great opportunity for our



UAF photo by Darcy Harrod.

students to diagnose and treat a lifelike patient before they are ever on the job," says program coordinator Chuck Kuhns. "With this technology we are able to run our students through thousands of real-life scenarios that they are sure to face once they graduate as paramedics."

*\*Tanana Valley Campus' name has changed to the UAF Community and Technical College to better reflect its mission and connection to UAF.*

## Students' investments pay off

The Student Investment Fund is a unique finance class where students manage an endowment worth more than \$510,000. The SIF was created in 1991 after students won fourth place in a national AT&T simulated trading game. To enhance students' understanding of finance, former SIF student Sam Enoka, '95 (standing third from left) and faculty advisor Craig Wisen (standing fifth from left) arranged a spring break trip in 2010 to San Francisco, the "Wall Street of the West." Students visited top financial firms, including VIASYN, the company Enoka now leads. Financial assistance for the trip was provided by Northrim Bank and the UA Foundation.



Photo courtesy of Student Investment Fund.

## Beneficial berries

**R**esearch conducted at UAF could lead to better understanding about the health benefits of wild Alaska bog blueberries. Fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants are increasingly recognized for their health benefits. However, an ongoing research project at UAF focuses on other compounds in these foods that could reduce brain inflammation, commonly found in Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, as well as normal aging and the progressive loss of cognitive function. Isolating and identifying these beneficial compounds could lead to the development of therapeutic agents for preventing and treating neurodegenerative conditions.

This type of research is part of the university's biomedical programs, which have expanded over the past few years with funding from the National Institutes of Health. This project was funded in part by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.





*After you peel off your orange float suit, there's nowhere clean — no grass, no tundra, no dry rock — to set it down. Unsettled, you place your suit in the mud.*



# Rebirth in the Aleutians

Story and photos by Ned Rozell

**W**hen you step on the beach of Kasatochi Island, something feels wrong. There's a smell of sulfur in the air, mud pudding sucks at your rubber boots, and, after you peel off your orange float suit, there's nowhere clean — no grass, no tundra, no dry rock — to set it down. Unsettled, you place your suit in the mud.

It's August 2009, and you're going to spend the whole day on the island with scientists. This has been a day you've thought about for the past year, ever since Kasatochi blew up in August 2008, surprising the two biologists who were living on the otherwise uninhabited island. The eruption was violent enough to strand air travelers in Seattle, who wrinkled their eyebrows at the Japanese-sounding word that's not Japanese. Most volcanologists also had to check their maps to locate the speck that sent an ash cloud across North America.

All 1.9 square miles of Kasatochi (say *-shee*, not *-chee*) sit alone midway in the broad smile of the Aleutian arc. Russian explorers named the island some 200 years ago. The Unangan people, or Aleuts, were calling it Qanan-tanaã for probably a lot longer.

You are here with Jeff Williams, a likable, boyish biologist, and Derek Sikes, an insect guy from the UA Museum of the North.

Sikes likes to search for insects where few have searched before. In a stroke of luck, he had visited Kasatochi just two months before it erupted. Being a museum guy, he had collected every insect he could catch in his 10 hours on the island: 396 specimens, about 60 species in all. Two of them, a beetle and a sawfly, were new to science. In his netting and tweezering, he noticed that many of them were wingless. As he leaned into gusts of wind along the lip of the great caldera, filled with aquamarine water, he understood why — creatures without wings are less likely to be blown off the island.

A year after its eruption, Sikes saw the aerial photos of the pale, lifeless doughnut the island had become. After an offer came from the keepers of the Aleutians — the men and women of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge who run the 120-foot *M/V Tiglax*, based in Homer — Sikes hesitated before responding. Despite his sense of adventure, his summer for collecting is short in Alaska.

"My first thought was, do I want to go to the island and crawl around in the mud and find no insects?" he says. "I expected no survivors and really unpleasant work."

Nobody who saw what happened at Kasatochi predicted escape for any of the former residents — from fly to blade of

UAF alumni in this story: Max Hoberg, '75; Stephen Jewett, '77, '97; Ned Rozell, '90

# “This was a special place. It’s almost like some

grass to bald eagle — from the explosive eruption, the tens of feet of suffocating ash and the gases hot enough to crack teeth seconds before vaporizing flesh. So complete was the destruction that scientists, usually the most cautious of writers, included in their research plan that the eruption “likely extirpated the terrestrial and nearshore marine biota.”

Sikes thought the island had indeed self-sterilized, resetting its biological clock to zero. But that utter destruction also was the appeal to returning to Kasatochi, even if he found nothing but a lifeless dome of mud — not many scientists get to walk on a brand-new landscape. A few have studied Surtsey, an island that popped its steaming head into the maritime air off Iceland in the 1960s, but none had been on a dead island that was crawling with life the last time they were there.

## A bug’s life

Hiking away from shore, we are relieved to find the mud-ash mixture farther inland is firm enough to support a boot. After mucking through a few gray canyons that rainwater has cut deeper than we are tall, Sikes, Williams and I find the insect traps Williams had set out for Sikes on a brief June stopover at the island.

Sikes drops to his knees; his head hovers inches above a peculiar box full of golf balls painted ash gray, designed to collect the carcasses of dead insects that rain out of the sky.

He finds nothing, and turns over a plate-size rock, kneeling in his rain gear with his nose almost touching the mud. He squints, looking for movement and the dark specks of bodies.

Williams and I walk uphill to where he had planted a two-by-four on his visit here a few months ago. It marks the site of an old fox trapper’s cabin, built in 1929, that refuge biologists had used for years. After the narrow escape of two biologists one year ago (see sidebar on page 12), the cabin was consumed by the hurricane of hot ash and debris volcano researchers call a pyroclastic flow.

“When I put that stake there, I kind of felt like I was burying the place,” Williams says.

It’s clear he felt affection for that 10-by-12-foot cabin, which he had repaired before and had slept in while the wind howled around its frame walls.

“This was a special place,” Williams says. “It’s kind of like someone you know died.”

Over the wind, we hear Sikes from below, where he is again checking the golf-ball traps.

“I found some flies!”

His discovery of four tiny carcasses in the fallout collectors translates to four flies per square meter dropping from the sky in the two months since Williams set them out.

“Not very much insect biomass,” Sikes says.

Williams wants to check out the site of the former auklet colony and retrieve a digital audio recorder he left on a wooden stake at the site. We leave Sikes to his flies and climb up a steep slope of greasy volcanic ash, our feet slipping a few inches with each step before the treads of our boots catch.

“See those scratch marks?” Williams says, pointing out small grooves cut into the slope. “That’s from about 200,000 auklets that came back here to breed this June. But there’s nowhere for them to do their business now.”

Williams estimates there was zero nesting success for the auklets one year after the

“See those scratch marks? That’s from about 200,000 auklets that came back here to breed this June. But there’s nowhere for them to do their business now.”



eruption. Thousands of chicks

once hatched in rock crevices here, their parents feeding off the sea’s riches; from the ship, the slope had looked like a green beehive. Now, ash has filled all those crevices, and the poor chickless auklets are elsewhere.

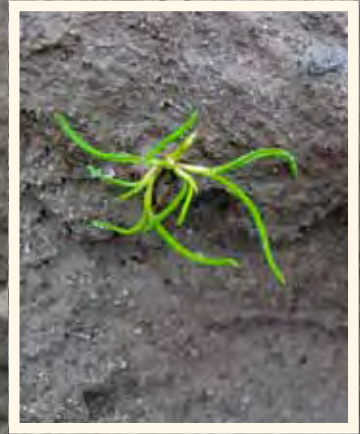
Looking at the desperate claw marks, we see an unexpected bit of color — the mint green of a spidery sprig of vegetation, the size of a child’s palm. We’ve been on the island for an hour, and it’s the first plant life we have seen. We spot other bits of greenery, including a few stalks of rye grass, the knee-high blades of which used to cover the island.

Climbing high on the side of the caldera, we see a tall, shallow recess formed by rocks. Williams squeezes himself in and pulls out a flashlight.

“There’s flies in here!” he shouts. “And what looks like a tick ... It’s a little bug bomb shelter!”

Williams pulls from his pocket a small vial filled with preservative liquid. Sikes had asked that all the scientists going onshore carry one or two, so they could collect any insects they encountered. Williams coaxes the tick in and catches one of the four pairs of mating flies. He also finds a spider, a small wasp and a beetle.

one you knew died.”



Following biologist Jeff Williams across the island, Derek Sikes begins a climb on Kasatochi.

*Inset top to bottom:*

Sikes, curator of the UA Museum of the North's insect collection, checks a trap for dead insects.

Sikes checks under a rock for signs of life. He spent more than an hour on the island before finding a live insect.

After a mile of hiking, this sprout of an unidentified plant was the first sign of greenery.



*Pyroclastic flow on the beach, eroded by a year's tidal action. Photo by Chris Waythomas, USGS, AVO.*



*Jeff Williams finds a "bug bomb shelter" in which several species of insect survived the eruption.*

His vial filled with surprises for Sikes, Williams heads down the slope, stopping at another subtle rock crevice.

There, in a shoebox of a depression, is a dead bird. Next to it is another. Williams pulls one out and gently spreads its wings.

"Fork-tailed storm petrel," he says. "They used to nest up here, right in this spot."

The bird is supple and soft, showing no signs of trauma. There are no insects feeding on the carcass. Why is it dead?

"I don't know," Williams says. "This is a bit strange."

A possible clue is a few feet away. Moss with clinging beads of moisture is growing at the opening of a crack just big enough to insert your fingers. On the back of my hand, I feel the warm breath of the island flowing out of the crack. Williams ponders the information for a second.

"Maybe these birds were gassed [by sulfur or carbon dioxide]," he says. "Makes just as much sense as anything else."

After descending a few hundred feet, we catch up with Sikes, who has made a similar discovery — in a rock crevice, he's found 50 dead flies, in perfect condition. "I have never found anything like this before," he says. "Some gas may have poisoned them. It's giving me a little scare."

Later, back on the *Tiglax*, the captain, Billy Pepper, says he thinks it's unhealthy to have the ship anchored in the lee of the volcano. The sulfurous emissions of Kasatochi are bitter and stale, and your gut instinct is to get away.

The crew pulls up the anchor and we steam westward about 25 miles until we're in a protected bay of Great Sitkin Island. Great Sitkin is lovely and green, a vibrant place representative of a mature Aleutian island.

We return for one more day on Kasatochi, and the weather is surly, not unusual for where the Bering Sea meets the Pacific.

Captain Pepper has warned that a storm is coming, and we may not be able to spend much time on the island.

At midday, Pepper calls the handheld radios of the scientists onshore.

"Let's wrap it up, folks. This wind is getting stronger, and it's going to get worse."



*Plants like this seabeach senecio were abundant on Kasatochi before the eruption. This plant was on the nearby island of Great Sitkin.*



A dead fork-tailed storm petrel in a rock crevice, possibly killed by gases still escaping from below the surface of Kasatochi.

### “You can’t stop life”

Assembled on the beach, with the fog so thick the *Tiglux* is invisible just a few hundred yards offshore, we look back through the sheeting rain and see Sikes’ blue rain gear along a gray backdrop. He is hugging a column of basalt rock, using every last minute to search for insects. When he hikes back to the beach, ash smeared on his cheek and water droplets on his glasses, he is smiling like a little boy.

“I found a dwarf spider and a stone centipede,” he says. “Both definitely survivors of the eruption, though I’m not sure how. Looked like they hadn’t eaten for a while because when I put them in the same vial, the centipede went right for the spider. I had to separate them. I wouldn’t be surprised if he hadn’t eaten all summer.”

Four at a time, we jump in the inflatable skiff that takes us to the *Tiglux*. After dinner, we have a meeting to share what the researchers have found. The theme is awe (at the destruction) and surprise (at the life that endured it).

Two UAF divers, Steve Jewett and Max Hoberg, found “a biological desert” on an apron surrounding the island where the rich kelp forests no longer exist. Plant scientists from Anchorage and Nevada found 19 species that survived the eruption; a blanket of ash seems to have insulated regenerative root mats from the hottest pyroclastic flows. Sikes reports that he and others have found 17 species of insect — flies, carrion beetles, predator centipedes and wasps — and he thinks they probably were in their own “bomb shelters” when the eruption happened.

“I thought we’d have a few years of zero, but this has been much more exciting,” he says.

As we begin to motor away from Kasatochi — an island that, unlike every other Aleutian island I’ve visited, I am ecstatic to leave — one of the botanists, Steve Talbot from Anchorage, sums up the experience.

“Dune grass and [a type of sea sandwort] are getting a toehold,” he says. “These are the plants that can take a real beating. They get going, and then get clobbered by erosion, but their buried seeds and rhizomes keep coming back.”

“The plants will keep coming back,” he says. “All of man’s things — concrete, steel — all those things fade away. But you can’t stop life.”



Ned Rozell, '90, is a science writer at UAF's Geophysical Institute.



This weevil (*Lepidophorus inquinatus*) is commonly found on Aleutian islands, including pre-eruption Kasatochi.



View satellite footage of the eruption at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).

**I**magine the excitement you would feel in being left behind on your own island for an entire summer, with an agreeable partner and a small but comfy cabin. You're there to continue bird studies started more than a decade before, and, when the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge ship pulls away, you are on your own.

Then imagine that near the end of your summer on Kasatochi, you and your coworker, Ray Buchheit, feel earthquakes every few hours. One day, Buchheit tells you to go look at the caldera, because rock avalanches pour into the water one after the other. You don't know it yet, but your island, a volcano with no modern history of eruption, is erupting.

Chris Ford of Kupreanof, in Southeast Alaska, spoke about this experience recently, after more than a year of not talking publicly about how he and Buchheit escaped the island's destruction by one half hour.

Ford talked about the last night he and Buchheit spent in their small cabin, listening to their island groan.

"We were just laying there counting the seismic movements," Ford said. "There's these little explosions, muffled booms, and then there'd be this massive vibration that would just rattle the cabin."

Cans of food skittered across shelves, some hitting the floor.

"We're sitting there looking at each other like wow, this is crazy," Ford says. "It hadn't really hit into our brains that this volcano was erupting. Maybe your mind just won't go there or something."

While debating whether the booms were coming from deep beneath their island or somewhere beneath the ocean floor, both men drifted off into fitful sleep. Ford remembers waking the next morning to the sound of an island in labor.

"I wake up to massive vibration, just the whole cabin going back and forth," he says. "Stuff being pitched on the floor. I was like wow, it's eight in the morning and I guess we're still here."

A few hours later, the men felt the island shake for 10 minutes straight. They had just heard on the VHF radio that a fisherman from Adak was approaching (Fish and Wildlife Service people had decided he could reach the island the soonest). The stench of sulfur penetrated the cabin.

Ford and Buchheit looked at each other, knowing it was time to move. They each grabbed a dry bag and staggered down the long, heaving, crooked path that led to a rock beach where their skiff was anchored offshore.

When they got to the ledge above the skiff, they looked back at the rocky slope where the auklets lived, a place they knew well from walking a study route along it every day.

"We stopped and looked up — the whole face of it was completely caved in," Ford says. "It had collapsed on itself. This was an area where we spent our whole summer, and it's just turned upside down, and it's still turning upside down, with rocks falling in on themselves. We were just kind of amazed."

Ford and Buchheit jumped in their inflatable skiff and made it to Al Giddings' 32-foot bow-picker, the *Homeward Bound*. As Giddings steamed away through neighboring islands, ash suddenly covered his windscreen — Kasatochi had erupted. Nothing larger than a centipede survived.

"It's sort of weird," Ford said. "That volcano blew up and it wasn't ready to take us with it. That's the gist of it."



Before



After



*Before*



*After*

*Above: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cabin (photo by Vernon Byrd, USFWS).*

*Right: USFWS cabin site after eruption.*

*Below left: Kasatochi crater the day before the eruption (photo courtesy of USGS), and after eruption (photo by pilot Jerry Morris of Security Aviation, courtesy of the Alaska Volcano Observatory).*

# The Great Escape

Kasatochi





May 13, 2010

- Grapes
- Fortune cookies
- Blue motorcycle



## The pint-sized patrons of Bunnell House

By Scott McCrea

There were serious issues to be dealt with on UAF's Fairbanks campus May 13, 2010.

On the third floor of Signers' Hall, the suit-wearing contingency was dealing with budget deficits, a planned protest for that Sunday's commencement ceremony, student concerns over rising tuition, and the usual bustle that accompanies the closing days of an academic year. In the Bunnell House Early Childhood Lab School, there was an issue of far greater magnitude being dealt with by the pint-sized patrons who spend their days there.

The blue toy motorcycle was missing.  
And they were counting on me to find it.

UAF alumni in this story: Scott McCrea, '94; Todd Paris, '83; Ned Rozell, '90; Connie Slater, '04; Paige Vonder Haar, '91, '96, '97

Let me back up a second here.

When asked if I would be willing to write a day-in-the-life article on the Bunnell House for this magazine, I immediately said yes. After all, when one spends most of the workday on campus dealing with budgets and protests, spending any amount of time in the company of small children is a nice change of pace.

You see, at UAF, the Geophysical Institute churns out research, Financial Services churns out paychecks and the Graduation Office churns out diplomas.

At Bunnell House, they churn out smiles.

Not a bad place to spend the day, indeed.

**7:20 a.m.** ☹️

I arrive 10 minutes early to begin my day, wanting to make a good first impression. There is already a parent and child waiting outside: Ned Rozell and his daughter, Anna. They arrived by bike,

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## Bunnell House's main mission is to provide observation experiences and a practicum for students studying early childhood education.

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with Anna being pulled in a trailer. It was Anna's first week at the Bunnell House, and as they waited outside with Anna clinging to Ned's leg, it was clear that she wasn't quite accustomed to the whole separation situation yet.

Despite Anna's concerns, her dad knows he is leaving her in capable hands.

"It's a great place," said Ned. "We love it here."

I let myself in through the downstairs entrance and am greeted by one of the teachers, Connie Slater. Connie started at the Bunnell House in 2003 as a practicum student from the early childhood education program and never left. I help her set up the classrooms until she lets Ned and Anna in at 7:30.

Dad's ready to go, but Anna isn't. This was a common theme that morning. While some of the children dropped off couldn't wait to join their friends the second they got there, others, like Anna, apply an octopus-like grip to their parents in their refusal to be left behind.

Eventually, Connie manages to get a tear-streaked Anna interested in an activity long enough for Ned to make his way out the door. They choose a location by the window. "You can wave to Daddy as he bikes away," explains Connie.

Seconds later Ned is seen out the window, biking his way up behind the UAF Fire Station. He turns to wave to Anna. She doesn't notice. She's already engrossed in an activity with Connie. The sorrow over her daddy's departure fades away as her day at the Bunnell House begins.

### Early education

Don't try calling the Bunnell House just a day care center in front of the dedicated staff. While it is true that the school does provide high-quality licensed care to children (ages 3 years through 6 years) of UAF students, faculty and staff, its main mission is to provide observation experiences and a practicum for students studying early childhood education.

But university students aren't the only ones who receive an education at the school. The child-centered environment is rich in learning opportunities for the children who make their way off the school's extensive waitlist and into the building. Among the skills children acquire are problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, competence, healthy attitudes and positive self-worth.

These are the skills one needs to get on in life, or to deal with budget deficits and student protests.



**A little after 8 a.m.** ⌚

Things are picking up on the main floor. As the father of a 3-year-old and a 10-year-old, I know that children this age are not supposed to drink coffee. As I observe the frenetic energy of the children as they dive into activity after activity, I wonder if some parents make an exception to that rule.

I have already become Mr. Popular. The children aren't shy about coming up and insisting I join them for some game. And join them I do. Soon I am helping Josie, Lizzy and Molly run a fashion show while they try on a variety of colorful hats. They are disappointed that my head is too big for any of them, and I have to

admit that I am, too, because they really are very pretty hats. The next thing I know, I'm helping James and Alex construct a road out of blocks.

Eventually, the line between me playing with toys and becoming a toy myself becomes blurred. I become a runway for toy planes that zoom down the length of my arm, while others find me to be the ideal height for a jungle gym. Worried that the barrage of attention might scare the day's guest away, Connie comes over



and reminds them of their manners. She need not worry. By that time I am starting to wonder if they have any applications for employment.

### **New life in an old building**

The school is in the oldest structure on campus still in use; it was built in 1922 by President Charles Bunnell. Staff offices are in the attic, the main floor is set up for children three years old and young 4-year-olds, and the lower level is for older 4-year-olds through the 6-year-olds.

"We have a lovely, historical building that provides that cozy, nurturing feeling that we want for our small children," said lab school director Paige Vonder Haar. "We also have access to a wonderful campus, which is perfect for a nature walk, a visit to see a raven sculpture or to go caroling at the chancellor's office at Christmas."

### **Mid-morning** ⌚

The Spiderman that I draw for my friend Wyatt looks more like a mummy, according to Todd Paris, the UAF photographer who showed up to take pictures of the day. Todd's presence makes me scowl, not because of his insult to my Spiderman, but because as he traipses around the room with his fascinating camera equipment, my status as Mr. Popular begins to diminish.

After we all clean up after ourselves, we join teacher Trina Bilbrey for morning circle time. Arms are stretched, feet are wiggled and silly songs are sung before everyone sits cross-legged for story time. On the docket for today: *Fox Makes Friends*, by Adam Relf.

The book tells of a friendless little fox and his efforts to make new friends. While reading the book, Trina asks the children what are some ways we can make friends.

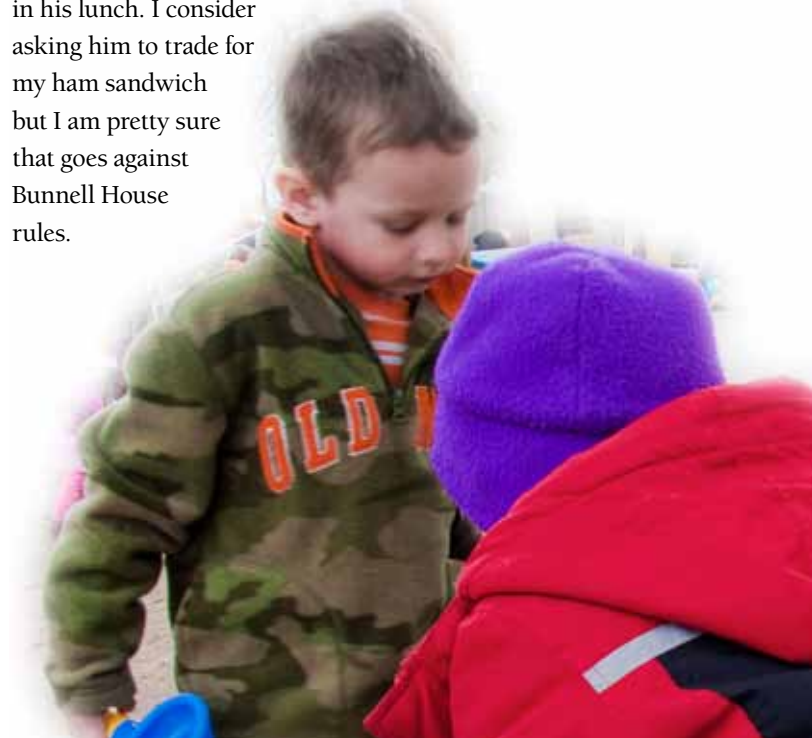
"You can say hi!" says Abby.

"You can say good morning!" says Wyatt.

I frantically take notes, not for the article, but because, by golly, like little fox, these are things I need to know how to do.

### **Lunchtime** ⌚

The fact that I am a little too big for the Bunnell House becomes evident when I pull up one of the tiny chairs to a tiny table to join my new friends for lunch and my knees end up next to my ears. Lunch is pleasant, and we go around the room comparing what each one is having and looking for similarities in color. Sawyer, who is seated next to me, has chunks of smoked salmon in his lunch. I consider asking him to trade for my ham sandwich but I am pretty sure that goes against Bunnell House rules.



After lunch I bid my main-floor friends goodbye and head downstairs for the second half of the day to spend it with the older children. Perfect timing, as Pammy Fowler, a teacher at Bunnell for almost 15 years, is just getting the children ready for nap time. They are spread out on the floor, blankets pulled up around them, while soothing Spanish guitar music plays in the background. Pammy helps the more restless children by rubbing their backs for them. Eventually, the guitar music is competing with the sounds of yawning, and one by one, everyone is asleep.

The teachers use nap time to catch up on prep work. I use the time to check the day's e-mail on my iPhone, though, as I look around in envy at the slumbering children, my own eyelids struggling to stay open, I realize there is something else I would much rather be doing.

**Mid-afternoon** ↻

Nap time ends around 2:30 p.m. Some children come out of it faster than others, but all come out of it ready for snack. As I



*The author gets a crash course in sandbox etiquette from some of the class of 2027.*

was never able to get any smoked salmon from Sawyer, I am ready for snack as well. I join them at the table for grapes and fortune cookies, and I read the various fortunes to each of the children. One of my snack companions is Peyton Ferguson, daughter of Alaska Nanook hockey coach Dallas Ferguson, so the conversation between the two of us revolves around how well the Chicago Blackhawks are doing in the NHL playoffs.

After snack I am introduced to a whole new world of toys and activities, from tile matching to a toy called Jacob's ladder that has to be explained to me about five times.

"I want to glue my hair to your head," said Lily, who would emerge as my bestest friend for the day.

"Why's that?" I ask her.

"Because I like you," she smiles.

### Late afternoon 🕒🕒🕒

From 4 p.m. until closing, it is all about outside time, and I join everyone for a bevy of games and activities, including playing soccer and enjoying a delicious pie made out of sand. Again, I am the one everyone wants to hang out with, not necessarily because I am a lot of fun, but because I can leave the fenced-in area to retrieve toys and pick dandelions for some of the kids to give to their parents.

Slowly but surely, the parents arrive, much to the delight of the children, who run excitedly into their arms upon arrival. Conversations are had with teachers, the children list the day's activities and any works of art created that day are shared. Those parents who saw me in the morning applaud me for still being alive.

And then there are four: Lily, me, Pammy and Connie. Lily's mom arrives right at the stroke of 5:30 p.m., and the last child is gone. Lights are turned off, doors are locked up, playground toys are put away and with the early evening May sun still high in the sky, the day at the Bunnell House comes to an end.

There were serious issues to be dealt with on UAF's Fairbanks campus May 13, 2010.

At the end of the day, those issues were still there.

Budget deficits, protests over commencement, student concerns over tuition,

and the bustle of the end of the academic year

would continue to be addressed by the

university's suit-wearing contingency.

And the blue motorcycle? It was found before lunchtime. Not by me but by James. Wyatt worked with him, and apparently it was found under one of the tables, tucked in amid a pile of zoo animals placed there by Josie and Abby.



*Scott McCrea, '94, is director of UAF Marketing and Communications and, after spending a day at the Bunnell House, is considering a career change.*



See more cute kid pics at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).



Preschool director by day,  
rollergirl by night



## Holy skate key, Batman, it's “Rolla Ghoul”

Tutus and fishnets might not be the most appropriate clothing to wear when one is director of the Bunnell House Early Childhood Lab School. But when Paige Vonder Haar assumes her alter ego of “Rolla Ghoul” as one of the hard-hitting, fast-skating, Fairbanks Rollergirls, or FBXRG, she fits right in.

Huh? Preschool director by day, rollergirl by night?

“Rollergirls are often nice, educated women no one would suspect of being in roller derby,” she explains. “They are mothers, wives, graduate students, artists, teachers, hair stylists and yoga instructors.”

Vonder Haar, who says she grew up with a skate key around her neck in the wilds of suburban Baltimore, got involved with the Fairbanks group after seeing a poster at her child’s school advertising a derby bout, or game, where part of the revenue would benefit the school. She went to the bout with her family, had a great time, and her then 10-year-old son, Douglas, urged her to join.

“A month later my family went to an open house the Fairbanks Rollergirls hosted and asked if they had a geriatric league,” she joked. “The answer was it didn’t matter how old I was, I was welcome. That was a Saturday. I joined and was at practice on Monday.”

Vonder Haar chose her alter ego (an important component of being a rollergirl) because her then 9-year-old daughter, Haley, had trouble pronouncing her Rs, and when she said “roller girl” it sounded a lot like Rolla Ghoul.

The FBXRG have been thrilling local fans for one year now. Rolla Ghoul hasn’t competed in a bout yet, but she can be seen in the middle of the track as a nonskating official. She is also involved with the many community projects the FBXRG participates in.

“The organization is a community-service league,” she says. “Every bout raises money for an organization, cause or family in need.”

So, Rolla Ghoul, if a little girl from the Bunnell House said she wanted to join when she grew up, what would you advise?

“Learn to skate so that when they are old enough — and their parents have insurance,” she laughs, “they can join the junior league.”



# Catching the Wind

By LJ Evans



*Top: A wind turbine farm under construction in Nome has the potential to provide up to 10 percent of the city's electricity when fully functional. The project is a joint venture between the Bering Straits and Sitnasuak Native corporations.*

Billy Muhando and his young son Glenn are trying to get a kite aloft in too little wind. Spectators are shouting encouragement but Billy's first kite-flying experience is pretty much a dud.

Glenn learned to fly kites when they were living in Japan, but for his father, born and raised in Kenya, it's a new experience.

Since Muhando is a wind specialist, perhaps he should be able to get a kite off the ground. But he was recruited to come to UAF because of his expertise in electricity-generating wind turbines, not flying kites.

"Billy had a specific skill set that we were lacking," says Gwen Holdmann, director of the Alaska Center for Energy and Power at UAF. In Japan, Muhando had been working on utility interconnection issues with wind power as part of completing a doctorate and post-doc assignment.

Holdmann brought Endusa "Billy" Muhando to Alaska to do research on electronic devices that will shut off the diesel side of a hybrid wind-diesel electricity system when the wind is making enough electricity. Such technology is especially needed in rural Alaska villages where the cost of diesel has skyrocketed.

"In many of the Alaska locations where they have wind turbines, even when there is enough wind, the diesel generators run anyway — people still have trust issues with wind power," Muhando says. "We hope our research will help improve power stability and performance."

ACEP staff have been collecting wind data at several Alaska locations, including Kodiak, Kotzebue, Nome, and St. Paul, in

the Pribilof Islands. They want to know what times of day the wind is likely to blow, how hard it blows, and how wind speed and direction vary through all four seasons. Muhando and his colleagues are assembling a hybrid wind-diesel test facility that simulates wind conditions at remote locations. The test facility will help them determine how effective Muhando's devices are at improving the fuel savings and efficiency of different types of wind-diesel systems.

Muhando hopes that after a few years helping Alaskans solve wind energy problems, he will be able to take what he has learned back to his native Kenya.

"In my country, we rely so much on hydro," Muhando says. "We have a problem when there is a prolonged drought, as this significantly affects the water levels, leading to blackouts and electricity rationing."

Several companies are working on wind projects in Kenya, he says. "The wind potential in Kenya is quite good. I thought maybe I could go back and contribute to the development of wind energy there."

### Climate shock

Muhando grew up in Kakamega, in western Kenya, which has a climate similar to that of subtropical Okinawa. Holdmann worried about Muhando and his son arriving in Fairbanks in January, to ice fog and temperatures of 30 below zero.

"At least with them coming in January we could say, 'OK, this is as bad as it gets. You're over the hump,'" Holdmann says.

“  
The wind potential in Kenya is quite good. I thought maybe I could go back and contribute to the development of wind energy there.  
”



Above: Billy Muhando of the Alaska Center for Energy and Power gets pointers from his son Glenn on flying kites. Muhando is helping rural Alaskans get more electricity out of their wind farms.



Muhando's wife, Judy, decided to wait in Japan for reports about Alaska from Billy and Glenn before she and their 2-year-old son Sheen made the big move in July.

Holdmann and the rest of the ACEP staff lent Billy and Glenn winter gear — warm hats, gloves, boots and heavy parkas.

"At first it was kind of a struggle. I don't think they were used to wearing so much clothing," Holdmann says. "It took a while to convince them that yes, you really *need* to wear a hat, you really *need* to wear a parka!"

### Cultural contrasts

The cultural transitions — from Kenya to Japan to Alaska — have also been interesting and challenging, Muhando says.

"Moving to Okinawa, everything was strange. Okinawans have a rich mix of cultures ... Chinese, Korean and Filipino. The food is very marine-based and often raw, which we had a hard time adjusting to," Muhando says.

At least in Alaska they found a common language because Kenyans are taught English from an early age. Muhando speaks three African languages, and he learned Japanese. "Writing in [Japanese] was an arduous task. One must master about 3,000 kanji characters before getting out of high school!"

He finds the food in Alaska more similar to what he is used to at home. He is looking forward to sampling moose and other traditional Alaska fare. "I haven't seen anything here that is peculiar yet," he notes with a laugh.

Holdmann invited Muhando and his son over for dinner a couple of days after they arrived.

"Coming to our house was a little culture shock in itself because

my husband, Ken Anderson, runs the Iditarod, so we have a dog yard with 65 sled dogs," Holdmann says. "I had told him about the sled dogs but saying that and actually seeing it are two different things."

"Billy is definitely an adventurous person, willing to take some risks," Holdmann says. "He's quietly self-sufficient. He's not the sort of person who toots his own horn very much. And for his son Glenn, too, to come all the way across the world — I give them a lot of credit."

### Taking it global

"We believe Alaska can take a leadership role internationally with this wind-diesel integration," Holdmann says. "We think ultimately we can be exporting expertise to other places in the world."

Muhando says that some challenges facing the development of wind energy in Kenya are similar to those in rural Alaska. Remote locations, lack of infrastructure and a shortage of people trained to use the technology are all shared problems.

Holdmann believes that having connections with people like Muhando in Africa, where there are isolated communities that have a lot in common with villages in rural Alaska, is one way UAF can be a resource for the rest of the world.

"Grad students, postdocs, faculty — they don't all stay here," she says. "Ultimately it's to our advantage to build these relationships because it's a bridge that we have with another place in the world dealing with similar challenges. The information can go back and forth."

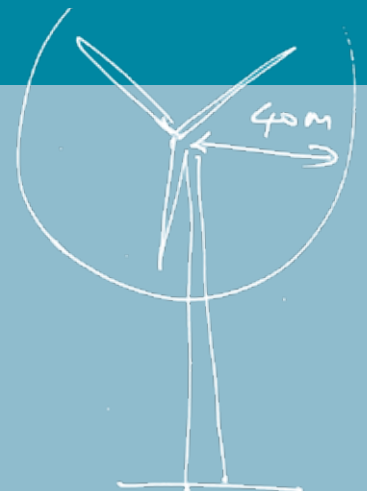


Having connections with people like Muhando in Africa is one way UAF can be a resource for the rest of the world.

LJ Evans is a writer and editor for UAF Marketing and Communications. She spent her spare time this summer getting to know a lime-green 1976 VW camper bus named Fiona.



Learn more about ACEP at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).



# Finding the upside

By Tori Tragus; photos courtesy of Sam Perera

The rains came to southern Sudan, lowering the temperature from where it hovered just above 120 degrees. Now the temperature averaged a more bearable 112.

Rain is a mixed blessing. “Sudan is so flat that most rural areas in the south get flooded and the people cannot get around for the next five months,” **Sam Perera, '96**, writes in an e-mail.

“Because of this immobility and the availability of plenty of water and grass for the cows, there is much less tribal fighting in Sudan during the rainy season.

“Everything here has an upside and a downside, I guess.”

Sam specializes in finding and holding on to the upside in some of the most dangerous, slippery-downhill-slope countries in the world. East Timor, Afghanistan, Sudan — even his native country of Sri Lanka, still in the first year of a cease-fire in its bloody civil war — all have made headlines with their carnage. Sam has made them each his home, at least for a time.

For now he’s living in Kadugli, about 300 miles southwest of Khartoum, Sudan. Sam is a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration officer with the United Nations peacekeeping mission. His focus is on special-needs groups: child soldiers, disabled and elderly soldiers, and women associated with armed groups, including prostitutes.



*Sam registers weapons turned in by a member of the south Sudanese rebel army known as the Sudan People’s Liberation Army. One of the stipulations of Sudan’s civil war peace agreement is the disarmament and reduction of forces on both sides.*

## Cross cultures

Sudan’s heat is suffocating even for Mohotti Arachchilage Samanatha Perera, known as Sam to nearly everyone outside Sri Lanka, where he was born and raised. His hometown of Colombo is on roughly the same subequatorial latitude as Kadugli.

“My father, who was an English teacher and an avid reader, used to tell me about faraway lands,” Sam says. “I remember once when he told me about a place called Siberia where the temperatures went beyond 60 below zero. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that one day I would be actually studying and living in such a place.”

Sam applied for a high school study-abroad year with AFS Intercultural Programs, and in 1986 was placed with the Marrs family in Kenai, Alaska.

“Most people around the world form their opinions of the USA through what they see in Hollywood movies and TV,” Sam says.

“I wish more people had the privilege of getting to know America the way I have. There would be much less anti-American sentiment around the world.”

Sam did well in high school and won a scholarship to UAF. He stayed in Alaska two years after earning his B.B.A., working as a credit manager for a bank in Soldotna and Fairbanks before returning to Sri Lanka.

Leaving Alaska was difficult, because by then Sam had become a father.

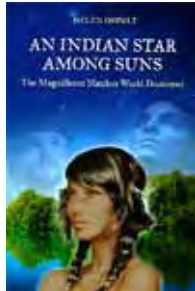
He visits Alaska frequently to see his son, now 14, who lives in Anchorage with his mother. The trips were easier when Sam’s job had a more predictable schedule. In early 2001, he relocated to East Timor (now Timor-Leste), as part of a U.N. effort to train the newly formed civil service.

“East Timor was just about to break away from Indonesia and become independent,” Sam explains. “Sadly, many lives were destroyed before the Indonesian army and its militias pulled out.”

Continued on page 28

## 1950s

**Helen Oswalt, '52** — “I am a 1952 U of A grad with a major in anthropology, and I am sending you a historical novel I just published called *An Indian Star Among Suns*. It is now selling on Amazon.com and tells a story that will keep anyone absorbed from beginning to end. It describes the dramatic destruction of the Natchez tribe in the late 1700s, but within this setting it focuses on a fictional tale of an unconventional Natchez maiden who falls in love with both a magnificent Indian warrior and a fascinating stranger who comes from the far north to trade.”



**Jack de Yonge, '56**, wrote his childhood memoir of World War II Fairbanks, *Boom Town Boy*, published by Epicenter Press in June. He is a former editor/contributor of *The Sun Star* and had a full career as a journalist and editor at the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, the *Seattle Times* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.



UAF photo by Todd Paris.

## 1960s

**Jennifer Jolis, '69**, joined the faculty of the Community and Technical College's culinary arts program in January 2010. (The Tanana Valley Campus was renamed the UAF Community and Technical College in July 2010.)



UAF photo by Todd Paris.

## 1970s

**Tom Albanese, '79, '81**, was the UAF commencement speaker in Fairbanks in May. He also received an honorary doctor of science degree at the ceremony. He is the CEO of London-based Rio Tinto, one of the largest mining companies in the world, and is known for steering the company toward a philosophy of sustainability, from an environmental, social and economic standpoint.

## 1980s

**Tom Emmer, '84**, is a candidate for governor of Minnesota. He played hockey for the Nanooks while at UAF. He married Jacquie Samuel in 1985, and they have seven children. He was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2004 and re-elected in 2006 and 2008.



UAF photo by Todd Paris.

**Rick Caulfield, '86**, has been provost at the University of Alaska Southeast since June. He was a faculty member at UAF for more than 25 years and served the last six years as director of the Tanana Valley Campus.

**Amy Geiger, '88**, joined the staff at the Downtown Association of Fairbanks as community development director in 2009.

**Robin W. Riendl, '88**, formerly of Smith Barney, opened her own investment firm, Provisio, for wealth advisory and investment management services for small businesses and individuals in Southcentral Alaska. Her prior career was in the resource management industry with firms such as Harding Lawson Associates and the State of Alaska Department of Transportation. She is a member of the PADI Diving Society, and volunteers time and expertise for Shoshin Ryu martial arts.

## 1990s

**Robert Hook, '90**, became a faculty member for the Community and Technical College's process technology program in December 2009.

**Curtis Thayer, '90**, was appointed deputy commissioner of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development in December 2009.

**Dirk Tordoff, '90, '94**, head of the Alaska Film Archives at the Rasmuson Library, received the 2010 Edith R. Bullock Prize for Excellence from the UA Foundation.

**Max Easley, '91**, senior vice president of BP Alaska, was selected as the 2010 College of Engineering and Mines' distinguished alumnus.

**Jim Sackett, '91, '00**, was selected as CEO for the Toghothle Native Corp. Toghothle focuses on natural resource development of its lands located around Nenana.

**Judy Dellinger, '93**, is the executive director for Love In The Name of Christ, a faith-based social services clearinghouse in Fairbanks. Judy has been a director of Habitat for Humanity and a grant writer for the Cold Climate Housing Research Center.

**Cate Wheeler, '97**, married Adam Koss in January 2010.

## 2000s

**Mona Jensen, '01**, was promoted in September 2009 to rural court training assistant III with the Alaska Court System. In this new managerial role, she oversees staff at the courts in Aniak, Chevak, Emmonak and St. Mary's, as well as assisting staff at the Bethel court. Mona has worked for the court system since January 2002, starting out as the jury clerk and soon after becoming a judicial assistant to a superior court judge.

**Cody Burgess, '05**, was hired as the Alaska Nanooks' women's basketball coach at UAF.

**Mike Campbell, '05** — “Self-promotion is the best promotion. I won the Civilian Volunteer of the Year Award at Ft. Wainwright and Alaska's Federal Employee of the Year, category V.” Mike is the commercial sponsorship and advertising manager for the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, and serves on a wide variety of community boards, committees and associations, accumulating 800 volunteer hours. “Michael Campbell is known throughout the community for



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[www.uaf.edu/alumni/](http://www.uaf.edu/alumni/)

Credit: D. Derksen/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



**Calvin J. Lensink, '54**, bequeathed a \$650,000 gift to UAF in support of graduate students and research focusing on wildlife management and ecology. The endowment is the largest private gift in the history of the wildlife biology program. Lensink was one of the first five students to graduate from UAF's wildlife program. His long and distinguished career in Alaska is especially notable for his involvement of university graduate students in his research. He epitomized the citizen-scholar, from his UAF master's degree thesis on Alaska pine martens to his 30-year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Lensink's doctoral dissertation remains the most important record of the history of the Alaska sea otter population.

his passion to help," said M.J. Lohrenz, nominator and DFMWR director. "His motto is 'I can sleep when I die' and the time spent giving back to the community is evident through the hours of service."

**Jeff Organeck, '05**, earned his professional engineering license from the state of Alaska in 2009. He has been with WHPacific's Fairbanks' office as a civil engineer since May 2005, where he is responsible for project management, design development and construction administration on transportation and utility design projects. He has worked in construction trades for more than 10 years, including two years as a construction inspector for an independent materials testing laboratory. He also worked three years for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' Northern Region Construction Division as an inspector and office engineer.

**Colleen Smith, '06**, and her students from Barnette Magnet School won first prize for their "SubZero Middle School" project in the annual School of the Future Design Competition.



Sponsored by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International and the National Association of Realtors, the competition challenges middle school teams to think creatively as they design tomorrow's green schools to enhance learning, conserve resources, be environmentally responsive and engage the surrounding community.

**Clinton Weter, '07**, and his wife, Colleen, celebrated the birth of their son, Falon Taylor Weter on Oct. 10, 2009.

- **Michael Wylie Rogers, '08**, was inducted into the Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame College Honor Roll. The honor roll was created to recognize individuals who played youth hockey in Fairbanks and later went on to play college hockey at the NCAA Division I level.

### In memoriam

- **Wesley A. Bucher, '75**, June 27, Spearfish, S.D.
- **James Dougherty, '57**, July 8, Fairbanks
- **Erich H. Follmann, wildlife biology faculty member**, July 26, Fairbanks
- **Mary Jane Harris, '88**, July 9, Aberdeen, S.D.
- **Teresa Hartung, Matric.**, June 12, Palmer
- **Brigitte Mayes, associate registrar**, April 27, Fairbanks
- **Lois McNulty, '64**, June 8, Sequim, Wash.
- **Barry McWayne, retired UA Museum of the North fine arts curator**, Aug. 8, Fairbanks
- **Donald B. Rosen, '62**, June 3, Fort Myers, Fla.
- **Nora Laura Sanford, former staff member**, June 8, Tok
- **Samuel W. Stoker, '73, '78**, June 11, Fairbanks
- **Lane S. Thompson, '66**, July 2, Fairbanks
- **Travis E. Thompson, '91**, June 19, Fairbanks
- **Arthur Thomas Tunley, '55**, June 13, Anchorage

Got job changes, family changes, awards to brag about, or do you want to become a member of your alumni association? Visit [www.uaf.edu/alumni/](http://www.uaf.edu/alumni/) to stay connected. Tell us your good news and we will publish it in the next issue of *Aurora* or the *Alumnus* newsletter. Send photos, too!

## President's column

By **Gail Phillips, '67** (past president)

We welcome all new students to the university. We are so glad you have chosen UAF. This is a busy time for you as you get settled in, but we invite you to stop in and visit the alumni office. If there is anything we can do to help your transition to university life, please let us know.

Very special thanks go to all returning students. Without your continued support of the university, many of UAF's programs would be in jeopardy. I hope your summer break went well and that you are ready to hit the books again.

Our annual Reunion Weekend is scheduled for September 23 – 25. This provides a wonderful opportunity for alumni to meet new students and to see old friends. During the awards luncheon, special recognition will be presented to the recipients of the Distinguished Alumnus Award and Alumni Achievement Awards.

As the outgoing president of the alumni association, I congratulate the new members of the alumni board and the new officers, and remind all alumni of the importance of your stewardship commitment to the university. As state and federal dollars decline and the competition for grants increase, the alumni of the university play a greater role in ensuring the strength and viability of the university.

Your alumni association is a dynamic partner to the university, and it is only through continued support of our members that we grow and succeed. Thank you for all you do for the university.



**September  
Save the date! 23 – 25, 2010**

# Four lives, four successes: Northwest Campus' Class of 2010

Northwest Campus is based in Nome, a community of 3,500 that is the service hub for the 15 villages of the Bering Strait region. This 44,000-square-mile region extends from Shishmaref on the northern rim of the Seward Peninsula to Stebbins on the southern edge of Norton Sound, and includes communities on St. Lawrence and Little Diomedé islands.

The campus works with regional health and tribal organizations, school districts and corporations to offer education programs that meet regional student and community needs, especially in vocational and business development and cultural preservation. Courses for certificates and associate, bachelor's and master's degrees are taught both in person and by distance delivery. NWC also supports learning centers in Shishmaref and Unalakleet.

**Nikki (Polk) Scherer**  
M.Ed., elementary education

"With UAF's program I was able to student-teach in Nome for a full year, which was very beneficial. I had a great mentor and was able to get a job in Nome."

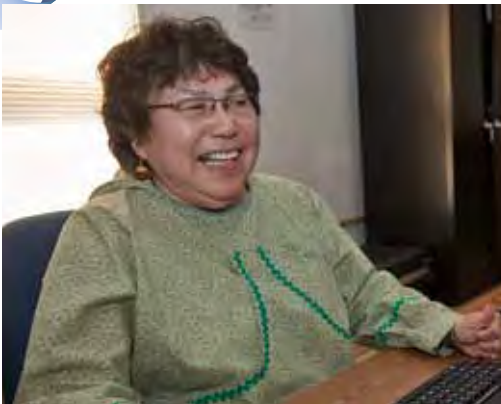


"I had three children before the age of 20 years and was living off of welfare. I knew I needed to further my education in order for my children to have a better lifestyle."



**Lisa Haugen**  
B.A., rural development: rural health and human services management

**Marie Katcheak**  
certificate, high latitude range management



"[The HLRM course] sparked my interest. I could take my time learning with other persons who had reindeer knowledge and the same lifestyle as myself."



**Janet Klein**  
A.A.S., applied business

"Though I have done the same type of work in different areas for over 20+ years, perhaps [my] degree will give some people the idea that administrative work can be a career and has validity."



Read more about these students and their experiences at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).



This spread: UAF photos by Todd Paris.

Sam Perera, continued from page 23

The violence was brutal. Up to a quarter of a million people were killed; hundreds of thousands became refugees. Sam was going to a place where peace existed on paper but not always in practice.

“Forty-two houses of the village I was living in were burned down,” Sam says. “My house was also torched, and I lost all my money, passport, clothes, books, etc. When I went back to my house ... angry villagers chased us with machetes and we had to drive [away] fast.”

### “One of the friendliest guys I’ve ever met”

Sam has an engaging smile, resonant laughter and a sincere interest in others. When his friends tell funny stories about him there is always genuine affection in their voices. His host parents from high school still speak warmly about the congenial chaos of life with the ever-popular Sam.

“Sam could sing and he was handsome, so he had girls calling the house all the time,” Marie Marrs laughs.

Jacob Joseph, one of Sam’s former professors at the School of Management, confirms Sam’s easygoing social nature. “He can make friends with a dog in the street,” Joseph says. “He’s just one of the friendliest guys I’ve ever met. He has a lot of emotional intelligence.”

Joseph sees Sam’s role as a facilitator in conflict zones as a natural result of two aspects, Sam’s character and geography. “If you recall, he’s [already] gone through civil war. East Timor, Afghanistan, Sudan, Sri Lanka: all those places have a commonality.

“Given that he had to adapt to another culture, coming from Sri Lanka to the U.S., and then Alaska, which I would say is a culture of its own ... he’s shown a lot of adaptability,” Joseph says.



Sam (second from left) and U.N. colleagues from India and Afghanistan, in Jalalabad, prepare for a mission to collect heavy weapons. In high school, Sam participated in the National Model United Nations program: “I remember thinking how complicated dealings in the world arena were ... and yet how important it is to maintain a forum [to] carry on some form of a dialog.”

Sam had to adapt again when he moved from East Timor to Kabul to hire and train the Afghan staff of the International Rescue Committee, an American nongovernmental organization; the staff eventually grew to about 450. His next assignment, back under the aegis of the U.N., was to educate Afghans about democracy and voting, and later, to run the disarmament office in Jalalabad. (“We collected enough tanks and heavy artillery for several countries.”)



### Breathing space

Sam has a self-imposed test: “From each country, when I leave, I want to have at least one lifelong friend. This has forced me to try to understand their cultures and ground-realities.”

Finding and holding onto common ground is, Sam reasons, as much a part of his job as the actual decommissioning.

“Just being in these countries, we provide the ordinary people some breathing space and a respite from brutal violence.”

Sam’s job is to turn swords into ploughshares, trade ammo packs for seed packets. But part of his heart is always with a baby girl in Sri Lanka. Sam married in 2008, and in late 2009 his wife, Nadee, gave birth to their daughter.

“My instinct is to return to Sri Lanka immediately to be with the family, but now I have to think of my daughter’s future also,” he says, explaining that he plans to stay in Sudan until the peace-keeping mission ends in 2011. By then he hopes his professional experience will be enough to secure a position in Sri Lanka to help in the rebuilding efforts there.

“Living in so many places and working in so many difficult places has indeed changed me as a person,” he notes. “After seeing what people have gone through during brutal wars, I am grateful for the life I have.”

“You will never hear me complaining about trivial things.”



**Tori Tragis, '94, '99**, is a writer and editor for UAF Marketing and Communications.

*athletics*

- SEPT. 18  
Women's volleyball at UAA
- SEPT. 25  
Nanook Hall of Fame class of 2010 induction
- OCT. 15 – 16  
Brice Alaska Goal Rush men's hockey tournament
- OCT. 16  
Women's volleyball vs. UAA



- OCT. 22 – 24  
Rifle vs. Tennessee Martin
- NOV. 5 – 6  
Swimming vs. Grand Canyon
- NOV. 20 – 21  
Ski Nordic Cup vs. UAA
- NOV. 25 – 27  
Mt. McKinley Bank North Star Invitational women's basketball tournament
- DEC. 3 – 4  
Glacier Classic men's basketball tournament
- FEB. 25 – 26  
Governor's Cup (two-game men's hockey home-and-home series) in Anchorage/Fairbanks

*arts*

- OCT. 8 – 17  
*Into the Woods* – Fairbanks Light Opera Theatre and Theatre UAF
- NOV. 12 – 21  
3 one-acts (*The Bay at Nice, Can and Play*) – Theatre UAF



- NOV. 20  
Ensemble 64.8 concert
- DEC. 10  
Alaska Camerata concert
- DEC. 12  
Jazz Band concert

*special events*

- SEPT. 9  
Convocation
- SEPT. 23 – 25  
Alumni Reunion weekend and Starvation Gulch

- OCT. 16 – 24  
KUAC FM fall fundraiser

*exhibitions*

- Through JAN. 8  
UA Museum of the North special exhibit — "Then and Now: The Changing Arctic Landscape"



UAF photo by Maureen McCombs



For more events, visit [www.uaf.edu/events/](http://www.uaf.edu/events/).

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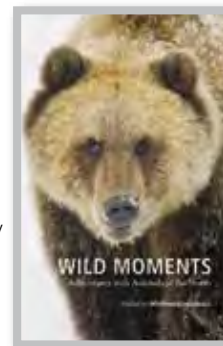
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