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Backstories: James ‘Dr. Fermento’ Roberts

BY O'HARA SHIPE

Some people are born into greatness. Others, like James “Dr. Fermento” Roberts, are created at 2am at Village Inn after a drunken night at the Miners and Trapper’s Ball. Dressed as the mad scientist behind the 1996 cloning of Dolly the Sheep, Roberts was too drunk to stomach his usual post-party meal. It was then, somewhere between vomit and pancakes, that Roberts recalled his upcoming photoshoot for the Anchorage Press.

“There was damn near a revolt when our editor told us that all the freelancers were required to have headshots taken,” explained Roberts over a beer at Humpty’s earlier this week.

Already perturbed by the prospect of being photographed, Robert’s wife suggested he go to the photoshoot in costume. “You could be, I don’t know, ‘Dr. Fermento,’” offered his wife. And there it was, the birth of a character who would contribute 3,000 columns to the Anchorage Press over an astonishing 25 years.

“I thought about quitting at 5 years, then again at 10 years, and then again at 20 years. But by then, it became a lot harder to walk away,” said Roberts.

Although Roberts is self-deprecating about his contributions to the Press, the fact remains that he is the longest-running author in the history of the paper, far surpassing his two beer column predecessors.

“I originally got involved because beer had been playing second fiddle to wine for so long. I believed in beer and knew that the column needed to be written by someone who would advocate and educate. Beer needs to be featured and it needs to be celebrated not just because it is relevant in the community but because of the economic impact it has had on Alaska,” said Roberts.

But Roberts’ column wasn’t just about extolling the newest flavor combinations. His column was about documenting the lives of Alaska’s legendary brewers, retailers, and breweries.

In one memorable 2009 column, Hope and Suds, Roberts paid tribute to Hope’s Velma Davidson.

“[Velma] lived on her own homesteaded property in a trailer, and when a customer would show up, she would painstakingly work her way from the trailer to the little log cabin where she’d use a key dangling from around her neck, partially hidden behind her silver-white hair on a piece of yarn, to swing the heavy door open and service locals and the occasional curious tourist with some to-go suds in the historic little hamlet across Cook Inlet,” wrote Roberts.

Over the years, Roberts has documented the opening and closing of countless operations and is infamous for spending the first dollar at Humpty’s when it opened in 1994.

“You see that framed dollar by the door? That’s mine. I waited for hours to be the first customer when they opened,” explained Roberts as he polished off his second beer of the night. Noticing his empty glass, an attentive Humpty’s waiter offered to grab him another drink.



“Have you tried the Denali Brewing Chuli Stout,” asked the waiter in an attempt to be helpful.

“Yep, I’ve tried them all,” Roberts responded with a knowing smile.

And Roberts has tried them all. From 49th State’s Thundershuck Alaska Oyster Stout that was brewed with actual oysters to “IPA’s brewed with cucumber and God knows what else.”

“There’s no reason to drink the same beer every day,” said Roberts. “The dumbest question I always get asked is, ‘what’s your favorite beer?’ Well, my favorite beer is the one in my hand, or I wouldn’t be drinking it!”

As Roberts retires from the Anchorage Press, we want to wish him an ever-full glass filled with his favorite libation. Thank you for being a part of the Press family, James. We will miss you!

Backstories is part of a by-weekly column profiling Alaskans (and the occasional visitor) in 750 words or less.

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Alaska health organization secures \$9.7 million grant to train new workers

BY YERETH ROSEN
ALASKA BEACON

Alaska health care organizations have an injection of federal money to help recruit and train more workers to fill a variety of in-demand positions.

The Alaska Primary Care Association has won a \$9.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Good Jobs Challenge program for a wide-ranging project to expand health care opportunities by training high school students and other entry-level candidates.

“Alaska’s healthcare workers have dealt with enormous adversity the last few years, and this funding will be a great boost to our workforce and to Alaskans who depend on our having a strong, vital healthcare system,” Nancy Merriman, chief executive officer of the Alaska Primary Care Association, said in a statement issued Monday. “APCA is excited to collaborate with Alaska community health centers and other key partners to expand workforce development programs statewide.”

The project, called Alaska’s Healthcare Workforce Pipeline, is designed to mobilize numerous partners to train 3,260 people and employ 2,270 new workers, according to the association’s application. The association is made up of the state’s community health centers.

The project seeks to recruit and train workers in all parts of the state, including rural and predominantly Native regions where there are difficult hurdles to overcome, the association’s application said.

“Alaska’s geography makes access to education, training, and apprenticeships a unique challenge. Urban areas have good access to work-based training, technology, and bandwidth, while most rural and remote communities do not,” the application said. “Travel to urban areas for training or sending instructors to regional hubs or villages is expensive and time consuming. There are also cultural differences and fewer resources available to people living in rural areas. They need more support to cover the cost of training, mentors, temporary housing, travel, meals, and childcare.”

There are numerous partners in the project, including health organizations, schools, tribal governments and labor unions.

The need in Alaska for new health care workers is dire, said Jared Kosin, president of the Alaska Hospital and Healthcare Association, one of the partner organizations in the grant. An analysis commissioned by his organization found that the state, as of last year, had 6,300 vacancies in the health care profession, with 1,400 of them specifically for nurses.

“Honestly, any job at this point is in pretty high demand,” Kosin said. “We have this huge hole.”

His association will use grant money to focus on apprenticeships, he said, particularly for certified nurse assistants and licensed practical nurses, positions on which health care workers can build to more advanced medical careers without leaving home. The goal is to provide on-the-job training “without taking them out of rotation, because if you take them out, you create another vacancy,” he said.

The Alaska Primary Care Association’s application was one of 32 nationally that won grants from the Good Jobs Challenge program, the Commerce Department said in its Aug. 3 announcement. Those winning proposals were selected out of 509 applicants, the department said.

Kosin said he believes some special Alaska circumstances – the cooperation among organizations that is necessary in a remote and small-population state – helped the application be selected as a grant winner.

“We all know each other. Everyone works with everyone,” he said.

The Good Jobs Challenge is a \$500 million program managed by Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. The money came through the American Rescue Plan, legislation signed by President Biden in early 2021 that is intended to respond to the economic hardship created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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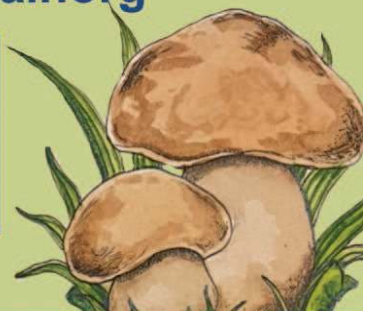
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Alaska conservatives launch group to encourage ‘yes’ vote on constitutional convention

The Nov. 8 vote could bring sweeping changes to the way Alaska operates

BY JAMES BROOKS
ALASKA BEACON

A group of conservative Alaskans, headed by a leading member of the Alaska Republican Party, has formed a new campaign organization intended to encourage Alaskans to call a constitutional convention and allow sweeping changes in the way Alaska runs its government, sets its budget and regulates the lives of its residents.

Jim Minnery, president of the anti-abortion Alaska Family Council, announced the creation of ConventionYes on Monday. Minnery is a member of the new group’s steering committee. The group’s chair is Craig Campbell, national committeeman for the Alaska Republican Party.

“The Constitutional Convention call is a fundamental question for ‘We the People,’” Campbell said in a prepared statement. “This is an opportunity for us to go back to see where our state is and where we want to go and under what rules we want to live by.”

Alaskans are asked once per decade whether they want to call a convention, and the next vote is on the Nov. 8 general-election ballot.

Convention opponents have been campaigning for months, arguing that a convention — particularly in a politically polarized time — will cause uncertainty and chaos.

“It is a slippery path, and once you decide to open up a convention, the constitution is very clear that delegates who are selected are completely free to entirely rewrite the document,” said Bruce Botelho, a former Democratic attorney general who chairs the leading anti-convention group.

The Alaska Supreme Court has repeatedly interpreted Alaska’s constitutional right to privacy to cover health care, including access to abortion.

A convention could be a first step to banning or limiting access here, either directly — by rewriting the privacy clause — or indirectly, by changing how judges are chosen.

R. Keith Heim, a member of the ConventionYes steering committee, said his biggest interest is changing the constitution to mandate large Permanent Fund dividends.

“The biggest driving force for the convention, yes, is to basically put this Permanent Fund dividend into the constitution,” he said.

Asked about the abortion issue, Heim said each member of the steering committee has “our own personal things that we’re bringing to the group.”

Among the other members are Jake Libbey, publisher of the conservative Christian website the Alaska Watchman; former Alaska legislator Fritz Pettyjohn; conservative Alaska environmental scientist and lodge owner Fred Vreeman; and Leigh Sloan, an Anchorage woman who says on her website that her “desire is to shift paradigms in our culture to reflect kingdom truths.”

The latter term is sometimes used to describe evangelical Christian ideals.

The group has not yet registered with the Alaska Public Offices Commission and lists its top three donors as two members of the steering committee and a relative of Pettyjohn.

In comparison, the vote-no group Defend Our Constitution is well established and well-funded, having listed more than \$320,000 in donations as of its latest disclosure report.

Among the supporters of the “vote no” cause are the chambers of commerce in Fairbanks, Juneau and Ketchikan, the Alaska Municipal League, and the regional Native corporations Sealaska and Doyon Ltd.

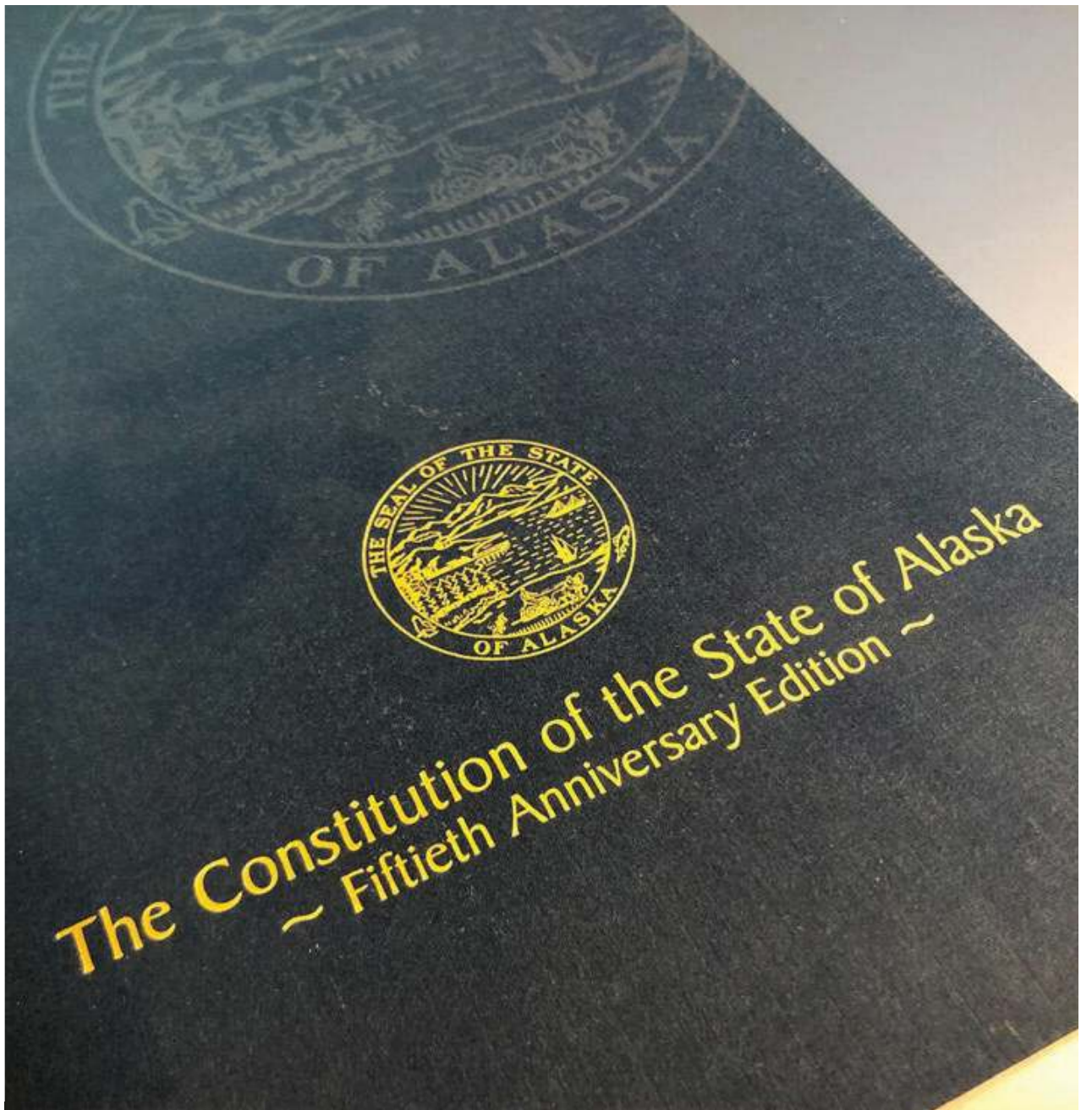
Many independent and Democratic politicians oppose the convention idea, as do some Republican candidates.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy is a notable exception, saying in an interview earlier this month that he will not advise Alaskans to vote for or against the convention. Despite that stance, Dunleavy voiced many of the talking points espoused by the new vote-yes group.

Heim said one of the new group’s key goals is to overcome the vote-no group’s assertions that the convention will cause chaos.

He said it’s important to understand that voting yes doesn’t trigger immediate action. State lawmakers will have a chance to pass enabling legislation, there will be a vote for delegates, and there will be a third vote to decide whether to accept what those delegates decide, a process that is likely to take years.

“We’ve just got to get the people to understand that voting yes is not going to kill the state,” he said. “It’s going to enable the people to say, ‘I don’t think this is right.’”



A copy of the Alaska Constitution is seen on Thursday, July 28, 2022. Photo by James Brooks/Alaska Beacon

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2011 federal investigation claimed Tshibaka falsified time sheets for 596 hours; she said she was exonerated

BY DERMOT COLE

Senate candidate Kelly Tshibaka, a long-time federal bureaucrat, often boasts that “I’m an anti-swamp bureaucracy whisperer.”

The whisperer held several federal jobs in Washington, D.C. until Gov. Mike Dunleavy hired her for \$141,000 and created a new \$139,000 state job for her husband as “assistant commissioner” of education. The state paid \$81,000 to move them to Alaska in 2019.

On Sunday, Tshibaka attacked Sen. Lisa Murkowski and quoted her out of context, claiming “It’s obvious she is not interested in putting forth the hard work to give our state a better future.” Tshibaka called her “Lazy Lisa.”

Any honest person who has been in Alaska 15 minutes knows that Murkowski is a lot of things, but lazy she is not.

In Tshibaka’s long work history inside the federal bureaucracy there is a disturbing incident that deserves public examination, especially now that she has chosen to attack Murkowski’s work ethic as part of her campaign for the U.S. Senate.

In 2011, an investigation by the inspector general of the National Reconnaissance Office alleged that between 2008 and 2011 Tshibaka falsified her federal work records and claimed that she worked 596 hours that she should not have been paid for.

The disputed hours included comp time claims, unexplained absences during the day, inappropriately charging hours to excused absences when she was already on leave and when there was an early dismissal for federal holidays. At her pay grade, the hours cost the government \$36,000.

At that time Tshibaka worked in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, where she served in the Office of Inspector General. From 2005 to 2011, she was an advisor to the inspector general in the intelligence community.

What her resume does not explain is why she left that job in September 2011 to become a “special advisor” in the Office of Civil Liberties, Privacy and Transparency in the office of the intelligence director.

I first wrote about the federal investigation that preceded her transfer a year ago.

The investigation into her work habits began early in 2011 when a co-worker in the Office of Inspector General said that based on a routine review of comp time and overtime charges in the inspector general’s office, Tshibaka appeared to be taking an excessive amount of comp time for hours she didn’t work.

The co-worker based this on “personal observations” about Tshibaka, asserting she did not show up early or stay late.

The first review found that, judging by ingress/egress records from October 2009 to October 2010, Tshibaka was not in the office for 215 hours she claimed to have been there.

At that point, Tshibaka’s office recused itself from the matter.

In February, the ODNI inspector general asked the National Reconnaissance Office inspector general to look into the complaints to “avoid any question of partiality,” NRO Inspector General Lanie D’Alessandro wrote on June 29., 2011. The people Tshibaka worked with did not investigate her.

The National Reconnaissance Office inspector general report on Tshibaka’s case, with her name and nearly every other name redacted, was released to the public in 2018 after a Freedom of Information request.

Despite the redactions, there is no doubt the investigation was of Tshibaka.

She told friends that August she had been investigated because of allegations that she had falsified time and attendance reports. The unredacted details about work history, job titles and the timeline match Tshibaka’s.

Plus, it appears that whoever redacted the document failed to do so thoroughly, as a Google search for the terms “Tshibaka” and “NRO” leads to results that include this link to the redacted June 29, 2011 investigation.

The Justice Department declined to prosecute, but forwarded the case for possible disciplinary action.



Kelly Tshibaka

Tshibaka wrote to her friends six weeks after the June 29 memo to say, “I have been completely exonerated!!!”

She said she was vindicated and “offered the choice to work anywhere else in my agency.” She said the Lord “delivered me from the toxic work environment in which I had been working.”

She said her supervisors did not agree with the investigation at all.

She said she had been “falsely accused by a ‘friend’” and that the NRO investigation had concluded she was guilty before considering her evidence. Tshibaka wrote that the five months of the investigation had been the “worst of our lives.”

In September, she wrote on her blog that she had been vindicated and given the job she wanted.

Tshibaka said the investigation had been finished “without receiving my exculpatory evidence and concluded I was guilty.”

But her claim doesn’t match the text of the report by the NRO inspector general.

She submitted an affidavit saying that most of the 596 questioned hours were those during which she worked remotely. She her supervisor approved her working remotely 20 hours a month, but the inspector general said her supervisors did not substantiate that statement.

The investigation mentions interviews with Tshibaka in the presence of her attorney and evidence that she provided during questioning. She referred to “37 days of badge machine errors” and said she had taken comp time for physical fitness activities no more than 7 times, a lower number than she had given in an earlier interview.

The NRO inspector general said her “supervisors were unable to substantiate all of the compensatory hours for which she claimed to have received approval to work outside the office.”

At the time of the investigation, Tshibaka and her husband were co-pastors of the Mount Vernon Foursquare Fellowship in Washington and had three small children.

A 2015 article about Tshibaka said, “Kelly feels her leading assignment is to pastor people at the agency where she works.”

“Though emphasizing she avoids being obnoxious, she is still vocal about her Christian identity while at work. That includes leading discipleship groups at work,

reading the Bible and discipling people,” the Foursquare church article said.

In 2011, the NRO investigators asked her how much time she spent on Bible studies, Agency Christian Fellowship and meeting or praying with friends in the cafeteria or elsewhere. “We’re allowed to talk to people,” the report quoted her as saying.

“She had no idea how much time she spent a week in these activities,” the report said.

The 596 disputed hours did not include the unknown amount of time during office hours that she spent on Bible studies, conducting interviews for a book and other church activities. There were dozens of personal folders and documents about her church activities on her Agency Internet Network. She said at first she did 20 interviews for her book, a project she never finished, and later revised that number to 11, conducted over five months.

The investigation concluded that from March 2008 to February 2011, she claimed 596 hours for which she should not have been paid. This did not include the 25 work days in which she had received the OK to work at home.

When Tshibaka received phone calls at home, she was tracking the time to count as comp time, the report said. She also went running at the end of the work day at times and charged that as comp time, though a person who appears to have been her supervisor said he was not aware that she was doing either of those things. He also said he was not aware that she had taken excused absences for physical fitness activities.

The Office of Inspector General briefed the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Virginia on May 17, 2011, but that office “declined prosecution in favor of agency administrative action.”

The inspector general recommended that the chief management officer of the national intelligence agency “review the facts of this case and determine any appropriate disciplinary action.”

Tshibaka’s transfer took place shortly after the report recommending “administrative action” was completed.

Tshibaka’s campaign should release the administrative findings that led to her 2011 federal job transfer. That’s one way of confirming whether she was exonerated or if the specifics detailed in the report were accurate.

Advisor to the Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General

Oct. 2005--Sept. 2011

- Co-led the creation and establishment of the OIG. Principal advisor to the IG on legal, legislative, policy, personnel, budget, planning, and facilities matters. Produced, oversaw, or finalized more than 65 reports.
- Advocated successfully for legislation that established the IC Inspector General in statute.
- Managed office-wide staff and operations. Increased the staff of the OIG by more than 50%, and implemented a strategic plan and work plan that increased production of reports by more than 100% over 2 years.

Remembering and celebrating Gary Holthaus

CITY WILDS
BY BILL SHERWONIT

I knew about Gary Holthaus, founding director of the Alaska Humanities Forum, long before I met him. However, I didn’t realize or appreciate how much he’d accomplished in his life — and the strong Humanist values he held — until after we became friends.

I trace the start of our friendship to June 2009 and the final Sitka Symposium, a remarkable gathering that for 25 years explored the interconnections of story, place, and community. I was approaching my sixtieth birthday, and Gary was in his mid-seventies. In other words, we were old-timers when our lives intersected and I began the process of getting to know this widely respected person, rightly described in his obituary as “an exceptional man,” — though Gary would have cringed at that description.

As one of the featured presenters at that 25th symposium, Gary had some provocative things to say that immediately caught my attention. One of his main premises was that humans are part of nature — no surprise there — but so is everything we build, invent, and create. Or destroy.

“We need language,” he urged us, “that honors all of it.” He further stated that “there is only one sacred place,” and it encompasses the entire universe. Therefore, nature writers and others need to broaden their outlook and their perspectives to “find nature in the marred and scarred . . . find beauty in the ugly and demeaned.” And we need to look upon and write about the “marred and scarred” without judgment.

In other words, we need to reshape our relationship with the entire Earth (and presumably all that lies beyond it). We need to see with fresh eyes and speak — or write — with a language that emphasizes reverence and respect for all of nature.

Being one who identifies as a nature writer, I sometimes felt as if Gary was speaking directly to me. And in a way, he was — just as he was speaking directly to everyone in that room.

Among his other attributes, Gary Holthaus, in my experience, was an inclusive and welcoming guy, in a way that few other people are. He was someone genuinely willing to trade ideas. Or, even better, stories.

At his core, Gary was a storyteller. He “told” stories through his poems and essays and other writings, and he told them through the spoken word. Thus the importance of language to him.

In his own understated way, he was also something of a provocateur, a trickster, willing — more than that, compelled — to say and write things that he knew were likely to spark strong and deep-felt responses in his audience, whether that audience be an individual or a room filled with people. He was also more than willing to present a minority opinion, even (and perhaps especially) among like-minded folks, to stir things up.

Again in my experience, he was also an exceptional listener, open and engaged. While Gary spoke in Sitka, I jotted notes in my journal, food for further thought. There was a lot to take in and absorb. Some of it I agreed with, some I questioned, and parts I simply didn’t understand.

We talked afterward and traded perspectives. But there was too much ground to cover in those circumstances, so we agreed to continue the conversation here in Anchorage, where he’d be staying a while before returning home to Minnesota. It’s something I anticipated then. And I have deeply treasured in the years since.

We did meet a number of times at a favorite coffee shop, and I began to learn more about his life and work. We’d barely scratched the surface of each other’s lives when he headed back to Minnesota to be reunited with his wife and occasional artistic collaborator, Lauren Pelon.

Gary returned a couple of years later after being “called” by the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, a ministerial calling he accepted though he was nearly 80 years old. It was, I suppose, something of a gamble for both Gary and the AUUF, one that paid great rewards.

It seems worth mentioning here that Gary was called to lead the Anchorage fellowship though he wasn’t an ordained UU minister, a very unusual thing. He had, however, once been a Methodist pastor in Montana, serving three small communities there, and apparently also helped to “co-pastor” a Methodist parish on the Kenai Peninsula for a bit.

What’s curious about those ministries is Gary’s long-time identification as a Humanist (even his obituary emphasizes right up front that he was a “self-proclaimed Humanist”).

When did that shift occur, I now wonder? Perhaps he wrote or spoke about those conflicting perspectives, but if so, I missed it. Or have forgotten it.

Because Humanism became central to Gary’s life, a digression seems in order here. Some people reading this tribute might wonder what the heck a Humanist is. I have sometimes wondered that myself. But, because I identify as something of a Pagan Pantheist who knows just enough about Humanism to be dangerous, I’ve done some online research to better inform myself.

It turns out that even the Humanists themselves don’t exactly agree. Still, I like the definition provided by The Humanist Society of Western New York. In part, it reads, “Humanism is: A joyous alternative to religions that believe in a supernatural god and life in a hereafter. Humanists believe that this is the only life of which we have certain knowledge and that we owe it to ourselves and others to make it the best life possible for ourselves and all with whom we share this fragile planet. A belief that when people are free to think for themselves (many Humanists therefore also identify as ‘freethinkers’), using reason and knowledge as their tools, they are best able to solve this world’s problems. . . . “There’s more, but that’s plenty for my purposes.

What’s most pertinent here is that my friendship with Gary deepened after he became the AUUF’s minister in 2012. Up until that point, I hadn’t known anything about UUs.

Part of what I’ve learned is that this tradition — like Gary Holthaus, which might explain why they were a good fit — is inclusive and welcoming of all beliefs, whether religious or Humanist or somewhere in between. And rather than a single creed, there’s a shared “covenant” of seven principles that supports “the free and responsible search for truth and meaning.”

Again there’s a lot more, but you get the picture. This was right up Gary’s alley. His ministry at the AUUF lasted about 5½ years, ending in December 2017 when his failing health required Gary to step aside, earlier than he’d planned and members of the fellowship had hoped.

Gary’s days of adventuring in the mountains and other wild places had largely ended by the time he accepted the AUUF’s call, and we never got to spend time together exploring the backcountry, something essential to both of us for much of our lives. We did, however, meet many times for “coffee and conversation,” and during this time, I also read many of his poems and, most meaningful to me, his powerful and provocative collection of essays, “*Wide Skies: Finding a Home in the West*.”

Through those essays, I came to better understand Gary’s wry and often self-deprecating humor, his humility and penchant for self-examination and reflection, and for telling things “like they are,” at times baring difficult truths about his own life, behaviors, and ways of being in the world. I also came to understand his love and compassion for people of all sorts, his desire to share diverse stories and perspectives and to give voice to underdogs and the oppressed, all while pursuing questions important to him,

questions tied to home, community, and the challenges of being human.

Gary’s essays also gave voice to the nonhuman beings with whom we share our planet, while recognizing their inherent value and our species’ complicated relationship with other life forms.

I also learned lots from Gary’s Sunday talks at the AUUF, each talk described in the order of service as that day’s “message.” I think he must have balked at even the suggestion that he was giving “sermons,” though the worship services he led — I suspect he had trouble with the idea of “worship,” too — did have a spiritual quality to them, at least to me, quite an accomplishment and perhaps something of a compromise for an avowed Humanist.

Gary’s messages to the fellowship often touched on social injustices and other hard realities and not infrequently had a sobering, provocative quality to them that frustrated some attendees, who wanted to feel more uplifted and joyous when they left the sanctuary at the service’s end.

At the same time, and more often than not, I’d

wager, Gary’s Sunday messages brought to light the important contributions of women and men who were not necessarily famous but deserved recognition for the social and environmental causes they championed. And you can be sure that the people whose stories he told and whose lives he celebrated included Alaska Natives and other people of color.

I emphasize my experiences from Gary’s time with the AUUF because that’s when I got to know him best and gained the greatest insights into his larger calling as a devout Humanist. But I’d like to mention a couple of additional sources that reveal other significant aspects of his life.

His son, Kevin Holthaus, contributed a delightful piece, “Dad’s Writing,” to the 49 Writers Blog following his father’s death. And his obituary in the Anchorage Daily News showed the extraordinary breadth and depth of Gary’s contributions as a “writer, minister, father, administrator of public humanities programs, teacher, social justice activist, outdoorsman and engaged public citizen. His territory crisscrossed half the continent, stretching from Alaska to Minnesota and Texas and through the American West. His capacity for endless cups of coffee allowed him to meet a spectrum of people — from academics to farmers, corporate executives to street people — and he sought wisdom from them all.”

I recommend both the blog posting and the obituary for those who desire a greater sense of Gary Holthaus’s life and legacy.

The obituary, I’ll add, importantly notes that besides his ministries, teaching, activism, “voracious reading habit” and his own writing. “Gary also loved music and collaborated with his wife and musician/composer Lauren Pelon to create and perform compositions incorporating her music and his words, deepening the meaning and resonance of both for widespread audiences.”

The bond, the love, and the creative passion he and Lauren shared were central to Gary’s life, as I’ve come to know it.

After Gary left Alaska for the last time at the end of 2017, he returned with Lauren to their Minnesota home. Unfortunately, Gary’s physical health and cognitive abilities began a slow and painful decline as the body and mind of a once vibrant and life-embracing soul gradually and quietly slipped away, Lauren by his side for those last difficult days and months, and years.

Now that he’s gone, this is how I’ll best remember Gary: the two of us are sharing stories, Gary recalling some incident from the previous day or years before, his remembrance ending in a chuckle, accompanied by a warm smile that brightens the moment, brightens the world.

Gary Holthaus, Aug. 21, 1933 to July 5, 2022, RIP.
Anchorage nature writer Bill Sherwonit is a widely published essayist and the author of more than a dozen books, including “Living with Wildness: An Alaskan Odyssey” and “Animal Stories: Encounters with Alaska’s Wildlife.” Readers wishing to send comments or questions directly to Bill may do so at akgriz@hotmail.com.

Good food takes time and Mochileros is worth the wait

RESTAURANT REVIEW
BY JIN CHONG

One of the more exciting places dishing out food in town is Gathering AK, off of Old Seward in the same building as Anchorage re:MADE. Since 2019, Gathering AK has functioned as an incubator for entrepreneurs across the community to showcase their meals or baked goods on a rotating schedule. It also happens to be where I discovered Mochileros for the first time a few years ago. However, they’ve since grown to become a full-on food truck to haul their Guatemalan-inspired eats around town.

It recently occurred to me that I hadn’t had any of their food since that initial visit. So with an appetite for Latin cuisine, I went to Double Shovel Cider Company last week, where they were stationed. The cidery was jam-packed, with a few folks already lined up alongside Mochileros’s signature bus — which, I have to say, is oddly reminiscent of another iconic bus in Alaska, even down to the green and white color scheme. This tenuous connection might make a little more sense considering that “mochileros” translates to “backpackers” in Spanish.

While examining their menu, I noticed their convenient ordering system, which sees patrons providing their phone numbers to contact once the food is ready. After placing my order, I ducked inside for shelter from the late-summer breeze and grabbed some cider to pair with my meal. The wait was a little on the long side, given that I was already on my second glass of cider by the time I got the call. But even if patience isn’t my strongest suit, I remembered the old adage: good food takes time.

Mochileros features a lean selection of goods, most of which are available in a few different varieties. Pupusas — a beloved staple of Latin American cuisine — seem to be one of their main draws. These thick rounds of griddled masa are traditionally stuffed with cheese along with some other kind of protein. Here, they’re available with bacon, chicharron, black beans, or loroco — tiny, exotic flowers which possess a flavor similar to artichoke or asparagus.

This time, I opted for the enhanced version of these savory treats dubbed the Mountain Pupusa. From what I can tell, the primary difference with this towering creation is the addition of many more ingredients piled onto the dish: curtido (a slaw made from pickled cabbage, carrot, and onion), guacamole, lettuce, mango salsa, cotija cheese, and corn, transforming the meal into somewhat of a salad, but with an edible plate.

After my first few bites, what immediately stood out was the abundant freshness of each component. Surprisingly, even the lettuce had some bite to it as if it were



shredded by hand, while the guacamole was as smooth and ripe as you’d want from an avocado. The pickled slaw managed to deliver a satisfying crunch and an appreciable amount of heat and acidity, while the little bits of mango contributed pops of refreshing sweetness.

Of course, this dish wouldn’t be what it is without the pupusa itself. I dug through the once-insurmountable wealth of toppings to discover a pupusa filled with stretchy cheese and a thin layer of black beans. What I enjoyed the most was the earthy flavor and starchy texture of the masa that looked to have been formed by hand. If you’re a fan of tamales, you will undoubtedly appreciate this fresh twist that fires on all cylinders in terms of flavors and textures.

Then there are the two pork dobladas I ordered — one of the specials on offer that evening. Though I lack the knowledge to clearly delineate the differences between dobladas, tacos, or even quesadillas for that matter, I noticed the dobladas were encased in a fried tortilla after having been griddled much like tacos de birria. They also look to be much larger than the tacos served here, but one commonality is that all their tortillas appear to be handmade. That, in and of itself, is more than a welcome change of pace as most vendors seem indebted to use oft dry and flavorless store-bought versions.

The magic didn’t stop there. From the start, I experienced a mouthful of some of the most tender braised pork I’ve ever had, dripping with fat and juices. Furthermore, each doblada oozed melted cheese in all directions, only for there to be even more cheese through a healthy sprinkle of cotija. There was enough indulgence in these dobladas to induce meat sweats and could surely satisfy even the most voracious carnivore. This nearly exceeded my own capacity for excess were it not for the two different salsas — a mango salsa previously seen on the pupusa along with a vinegary chimichurri-like concoction that possessed a significant amount of heat. I ended up making liberal use of these sauces to help consume these crunchy, greasy explosions until I felt as though my heart would give out.

With little room left, I committed to trying one last item on their menu. Elotes — also known as Mexican street corn — are served here not just in the traditional way but also in Flamin’ Hot, nacho cheese, and chile limón variants as well. I’ve yet to see such playful preparations done anywhere else before, and the fat kid in me was delighted to see such a creative incorporation of junk food. I went with the chile limón flavor, which I later realized was likely made from crushed-up Dinamita tortilla chips based on the unmistakable flavor of processed corn. This corn-on-corn action definitely struck a

chord, but what kept it from reaching higher ground was the fact that the corn had been either steamed or boiled — not grilled. Without any hints of char from a grill, this elote was still satisfying in a backyard BBQ sort of way — just not as outstanding as it could have been.

I can attest that not much has changed since my first visit to Mochilero — in a good way, mind you. If anything, their expanded menu and rotating specials indicate they’ve accelerated past their infancy and are now as confident as ever in doling out their street food approach to Guatemalan food. For many, this food truck stands as a gateway into a cuisine few are fortunate to know much about. If there’s any truth to the idea that the people of Guatemala eat food this good on a regular basis, then this may very well be one of the world’s most underrated cuisines.

Food trucks usually don’t have much permanence due to their transient business model, but for our sake, I hope Mochileros sticks around for a long, long time.

To find out where you can snag some of this delectable street food, visit mochileros-street-food.square.site.





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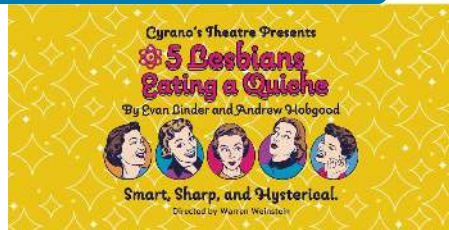
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Thu 8/11

Featured



5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 7pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org



Open Mic with Shalah Rose

@ 7pm

Come join us and show us your skills on how you like to entertain. Hosted by Shalah Rose this is a great way for all to show us your talents! No cover charge. 2906 Spenard Rd, 2906 Spenard Road, Anchorage. jeramy@cannabisace.com, 907-360-8036

Fri 8/12

5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 7pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org

Sat 8/13

Volunteer Extravaganza

@ 10am

Learn about Habitat for Humanity's volunteer opportunities and get involved! ReStore, 1200 West Northern Lights Boulevard, Anchorage. jroberts@habitatanchorage.org

Featured



Summer Family Fun Day at the Alaska Zoo

@ 11am

A day of family fun, live music and food by Tacos El Primo. Bring a blanket or chair, buy lunch, enjoy live music and walk the zoo trails! Kids activity station will be in the greenhouse. Alaska Zoo, 4731 O'Malley Road, Anchorage. aom@alaskazoo.org, 907-346-2133



Featured



JAUZ: Bite This! Block Party Tour

@ 6pm

Los Angeles-based EDM producer and remixer with tracks ranging from chill trap to future garage Willi-waw Social, 609 F St, Anchorage



Featured



August Fund Dog Adoption

@ 3pm

Come join us while we hang out with some of the living legends of the Iditarod trail! We are trying to find forever homes for these retired athletes who are looking for love. So come find your new pal Alaska Cannabis Exchange, 2906 Spenard Road, Anchorage. jeramy@cannabisace.com, 907-360-8036



Comedian Jason Collings

@ 7pm / \$20

Koot's, 2435 Spenard Rd, Anchorage

Featured



Jo Koy

@ 8pm

As one of today's premiere stand-up comics Jo Koy has come a long way from his modest beginnings performing at a Las Vegas coffee house. The comedian, who pulls inspiration from his family, specifically his son, sells-out arenas and theaters across the world. Sullivan Arena, 1600 Gambell St, Anchorage



Sun 8/14

5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 3pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org

Wed 8/17

Art Class-Painted Drink Tumbler - Advanced Reservation Required

@ 6pm / \$48

Paint a drink tumbler in this class, we will be painting a double insulated stainless steel travel tumbler with vibrant alcohol inks - Advanced Reservation Required <http://sparkletribe.net> Turnagain Arts Building, 4105 East Turnagain Boulevard, Julie Moraes Artistry Suite A3 Suite is in front of the building facing the street, Anchorage. sparkletribe1@gmail.com

Stories with Mr. Clay

@ 7:15pm

Dr. Lidia Selkregg Chalet, 1600 Lidia Selkregg Lane, Anchorage. 907-343-4355

Thu 8/18

5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 7pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org

Open Mic with Shalah Rose

@ 7pm

Come join us and show us your skills on how you like to entertain. Hosted by Shalah Rose this is a great way for all to show us your talents! No cover charge. 2906 Spenard Rd, 2906 Spenard Road, Anchorage. jeramy@cannabisace.com, 907-360-8036

Fri 8/19

Featured



28th Annual Alaska Greek Festival

@ 3pm

Aug 19th - Aug 21st Come & enjoy a taste of Greece with the best homemade Greek food and Greek pastries in Alaska! August 19 - August 21 at 2800 O'Malley Rd. Free parking & admission. Facebook: Alaska Greek Festival. Alaska Greek Festival, 2800 O'Malley Road, Anchorage. akgreekfestival@gmail.com



5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 7pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org

Sat 8/20

Resin Art Class-Salmon On Wood Hanger Advanced Reservation Required

<http://sparkletribe.net>

@ 12:30pm / \$55

Learn the basics of working with resin, pigment powders & resin dyes to create a unique salmon art piece on a wood cutout! Wood hanger included! Turnagain Arts Building, 4105 East Turnagain Boulevard, Julie Moraes Artistry Suite A3 Suite is in front of the building facing the street, Anchorage. sparkletribe1@gmail.com

5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 7pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org

Her Time to Play

@ 9pm

Aug 20th - Nov 5th Fairview Community Recreation Center, 1121 East 10th Ave., Anchorage. 907-343-4355

Supernova Alaska: SUPERNOVA LIVE AT HUMPTY'S

@ 9:30pm

Humpy's Great Alaskan Alehouse, 610 W 6th Ave, Anchorage

Featured



Radiance

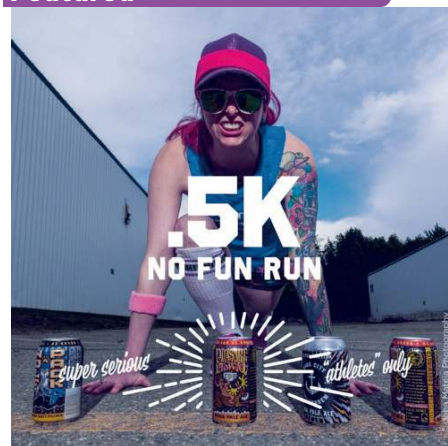
@ 2pm / \$20

An experience in Spenard that is hard to miss. With a local artist coming together to brighten and show off the talents of Anchorage in the heart of its art district. Alaska Cannabis Exchange, 2906 Spenard Road, Anchorage. jeramy@cannabisace.com, 907-360-8036



Sun 8/21

Featured



The Super Serious, No Fun .5K Run

@ 12pm / \$25-\$35

Midnight Sun Brewing Co., 8111 Dimond Hook Dr., Anchorage



5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche

@ 3pm / \$30

Join us for a farcical, interactive comedy! Cyrano's Theatre Company, 3800 Debarr Road, Anchorage. alexis@cyranos.org

Wed 8/24

Art Class-BirchTree Painting Advanced Reservation Required

<http://sparkletribe.net>

@ 6pm / \$48

Let's paint birch trees on a wood canvas! You choose your background colors! Advanced Reservation Required <http://sparkletribe.net> Turnagain Arts Building, 4105 East Turnagain Boulevard, Julie Moraes Artistry Suite A3 Suite is in front of the building facing the street, Anchorage. sparkletribe1@gmail.com

Anthony Nunziata

@ 7pm

Grand Princess Cruise - Private Event, Anchorage

Stories with Mr. Clay

@ 7:15pm

Dr. Lidia Selkregg Chalet, 1600 Lidia Selkregg Lane, Anchorage. 907-343-4355

For event details and even more listings visit us online!

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Get direct links to the event details at AKconcerts.com
Or read below if you just want to know the time & place.

Thursday, August 11th

Alaska Cannabis Exchange – Open Mic with Shalah Rose 7p-9p
Anchorage Brewing Company – Wiley Post Band 5:30p-8:30p
Bear Paw Bar & Grill – Danger & Diva Live 7:30p-10:30p
The Carousel Lounge – Open Mic Thursdays hosted by Jesse LeBoeuf 9p-1a
Flattop Pizza & Pool – Jukebox Karaoke Roadshow 8p-11p
Hatcher Pass Lodge (Palmer) – Jim Lewin & Diana Z 4p-6p
Humpty’s – Nothin’ But Karma 8:30p-12:30a
Koot’s – MIX & MINGLE Thursday Night Takeover 9p-1a
Koot’s – Bad Charlotte 10p-2a
Mad Myrna’s –Thursday Vibe w/ DJ Covy 10p-2a
Tailgater’s Sport’s Bar & Grill (Wasilla) - The AKoustic Project 7p-10p
Van’s Dive Bar – QUEER AS HELL 9p-12a
Williwaw Social – Diggin Dirt Live w/ The Jangle bees & Witty Youngman 6p-11p
Williwaw Social – The Eternal Cowboys Rock the Roof 8p-12a



Friday, August 12th

American Legion Post 15 (Palmer) – Friday Night Feast w/ 100 Proof Karaoke 6p-8p
American Legion Spenard Post 28 – Acoustic Steak Night with MusiCal! 6p-8p
Bernie’s Bungalow Lounge – Unknowns 6p-10p
Broken Blender – Nothin’ But Karma 8p-2a
The Carousel Lounge – The Glacier Blues Band 9p-1a
Cyrano’s Playhouse – 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche 7p-8p
Downtown Palmer Pavilion (Palmer) – Cousin Curtiss 11:30a-1:30p
Downtown Palmer Pavilion (Palmer) – Roland Roberts Band 4:30p-6p
Everett’s (Wasilla) – Comedy Show w/ Jason Collings 7p-8:15p
Floaters (Big Lake) – Open Mic Night 7p-12a
The Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 4207 – Karaoke Friday at the Eagles! 7p-12a
The Gaslight Bar – The Jukebox Karaoke Roadshow 8p-11p
Hilltop Ski Area – Under the Tree Music Scene: Lilac 7p-8:30p

Humpty’s – The Jangle Bees 9:30p-1:30a
Koot’s – Bad Charlotte 10p-2:30a
Mad Myrna’s – Mad Myrna’s Diva Variety Show 9p-11:30p
Matanuska Brewing (Eagle River) – The Young Dubliners 6p-10p
O’Malley’s on the Green – Silver Train 7p-10p
Organic Oasis – John Damberg Jazz Piano Fridays 5:30p -7:30p
Palmer Alehouse (Palmer) – Cousin Curtiss LIVE 7p-10p
Van’s Dive Bar – Acoustic Oosik & Evolution of a Thursday! 9p-12a
Williwaw Social – Vintage & Vinyls Night Market w/ DJ GRE 4p-10p
Williwaw Social – Endless Summer House Party w/ Fan Service 9:30p-2:30a



Saturday, August 13th

Alaska Redd Facebook (Online) – Hip Hop Artist Showcase (Online) 5p-6p
Alyeska Resort (Girdwood) – Blueberry Festival w/ Mario Carboni, Ava Earl, & Edge of the West 12p-8p
Anchorage Town Square – Galway Days Irish Festival 11a-6p
Cafecito Bonito – Brainhole & The High Femmes 6:30p-10p
Dimond Center (Anchorage) – Back to School Bash w/ The Stack 12p-2p
The Gaslight Bar – The Jukebox Karaoke Roadshow 8p-11p
Humpty’s – Nervis Rex 9:30p-1:30a
Koot’s – Comedian Jason Collings 7p-9p & 9:30p-11p
Koot’s – Bad Charlotte 10p-2:30a
Koot’s – Judi Gras! Mardi Gras party in Spenard! 10p-2:30a
Mad Myrna’s – Mad Myrna’s Diva Variety Show 9p-11:30p
Matanuska Brewing (Eagle River) – Def Leppard Tribute by Hysteria 6p-10p
Palmer Alehouse (Palmer) – I Like Robots 7p-10p
Peratrovich Park (Anchorage) – Downtown Jazz in the Park 4p-6p
Raven Bar – Hot Raven Nights: Puppy Party 9p-2a
Schwabenhof (Wasilla) - Cold Fusion Live 7p-11p
Van’s Dive Bar – Piss Denim & The Store 9p-12a
Williwaw Social – BURN & BLOOM: poses&mimosa w/ DJ GRE 10a-1p
Williwaw Social – Jauz Presents : Bite This! Block Party 7p-10p



Sunday, August 14th

Alyeska Resort (Girdwood) – Zero Miles to Empty, Past Our Prime, JunoSmile, & Loaded Karma 12p-8p
Anchorage Town Square Park – ANC Market Social 11a-5p
The Carousel Lounge – AK Rockstar Karaoke Sunday 8p-2a
Humpys - Open Mic Jam 8p-11p
The Inn at Whittier (Whittier) – Jim Lewin & Diana Z 8p-11p
KONR 106.1 FM Out North Radio – Beat Roots Alaska: Summer '22 w/ Thundroid 3p-5p
Koot’s – Taste of Spenard 12p-5p
Koot’s – Comedy Open Mic 8:30p-10p
Koot’s – Bad Charlotte 10p-2a
Mad Myrna’s – Karaoke 9p-12a
Van’s Dive Bar – Open Mic! Overlorded by Wash Your Hands 8p-12a

Monday, August 15th

Crow Creek Mine (Girdwood) – Larry Zarella 6p-8:30p
Koot’s – The Monday Mic at Koots 9p-12a
Spoonline (Girdwood) – Jim Lewin & Diana Z 7p-9p
Van’s Dive Bar – Nikki Now 9:30p-12a

Tuesday, August 16th

American Legion Spenard Post 28 – Taco Tuesday Open Mic w/Gary Stedman! 6:30p-9:30p
Anchorage Museum – Lunch on the Lawn: Fox in the Henhouse 11:30a-1:30p
The Carousel Lounge – AK Rockstar Karaoke 8p-2a
Humpty’s – Will Johnson 8:30p-12:30a
Klondike Mike’s & the Main Street Grill (Palmer) – The Open Stage 7p-10p
Koot’s – The Eternal Cowboys 10p-12a
Organic Oasis –Turnagain Blue 5:30p-7:30p
Trophy Lounge – Jukebox Karaoke Roadshow 9p-1a
Van’s Dive Bar – OPEN JAM w/ Daylight Mike 9p-12a

Wednesday, August 17th

907 Alehouse –Tyrone Palmer & Friends 7p-10p
The Carousel Lounge – AK Rockstar Karaoke 8p-11p
Eddie’s Sports Bar – Jukebox Karaoke Roadshow 9p-12a
Humpty’s – Lisa Lisa & That Guy 8:30p-12:30a
Koot’s – Comedy Open Mic 8:30p-10p
Koot’s – KASH Country Night at Koot’s 7p-11:30p
Koot’s –Koots Karaoke 10p-2a
Mad Myrna’s – Karaoke 9p-12a
Pioneer Bar – The Eternal Cowboys 10p-12a
PubHouse – Witty Youngman 7p-10p
Schwabenhof (Wasilla) - Open Mic 7p-12a
Van’s Dive Bar – Karaoke w/ The Milkman and/or The Dairy Queen! 9p-12a

Get direct links to the event details at AKconcerts.com

Mr. 3,000

James “Dr. Fermento” Roberts bids adieu after 25 years

BEER
BY JAMES “DR. FERMENTO” ROBERTS

Every year since starting to write this weekly beer column, I pause on my anniversary day and go back and re-read my first column. I always like to get a feel for how my writing’s changed since then. This year I’m doing something different. This is my last regular column for this beloved newspaper.

Let me explain. I love the Press. I love the people, and I still deeply love beer, and I always will. No, I didn’t get a DUI. I’m not moving away. And for sure, I haven’t quit drinking beer. Beer is always a great ride. But, with this being my 25th year of consecutive weekly columns – my 3,000th this week – it’s time to pass the mug along to someone better to represent our amazing beer world up here. But don’t fear, I’ll still contribute when the beer and writing bug hits me.

The Press has been an incredible pulpit for spreading the gospel of good local beer, and it’s been an honor to feature, celebrate, and heap the accolades on the craft beer artisans that keep me wonderfully watered with an ever-changing tapestry of local beer that represents Alaskans and their eternal quest for adventure and boldness. This will never change.

Beer’s never been boom or bust up here, although I’ve seen eleven breweries start up and then dissolve – with varying lifespans – in my tenure. Add to that the over fifty licensed, operating breweries in our state, four of which opened during and post-pandemic, during the most challenging time for any kind of start-up.

With the ebb and flow of breweries up here, we are far from high tide. I know of at least two breweries that are in development, and there are probably some I don’t know about yet. Of the over 50 breweries up here, I’ve only been to thirty-three of them. So, there is still plenty for an intrepid new writer to explore.

Beer’s presence is telling. Beer up here has incredible staying power. The industry’s changed, the support systems around it have changed, laws, regulations, and taxes have changed. Brewers and breweries have come and gone. But what hasn’t changed is the consistent flow of some of the world’s best and most critically acclaimed suds. Alaskans should be proud to be a part of that. We should be bragging about it because it will never stop. It truly is something to write home about!



Part of my reason for stepping away from featuring Alaska’s great beer is simply because I can’t keep up with it. To internalize something to the point of accuracy and credibility and properly represent it, I must be immersed in it. That’s a considerable calling when over half of our breweries are geographically dispersed across this exceptionally expansive state.

You beer-lovin’ Press readers deserve more! I can’t point to any noteworthy accomplishments that make any real difference to anyone else. Still, beer’s taken me to some far-flung reaches of this state that I would never have visited if not to chase local beer. And I’ve had some amazing adventures – like the time I got to swim in 500 gallons of beer! I also went to the Playboy Mansion in Beverly Hills because of beer. Look in the display cabinet at the 6th Avenue entrance to Humpty’s, and you’ll see a framed dollar bill. That’s mine; the first one spent there when the iconic alehouse opened almost three decades ago.

Beer’s a great ride, and I’m not dismounting yet. I learned in school that any good piece of writing – in a format like the Press has to have a writing objective. This answers the question: “what do you want the reader to come away with?” This keeps my writing focus. With very little deviation, my writing objective has been “make people thirsty for good beer.” And most writing needs a purpose: to inform, persuade, or entertain, often in combination.

At least with the writing objective part, I’ve very rarely deviated. That’s why, within the 3,000 columns, you won’t find me having featured beer politics, the fettering and restricting beer laws and taxes, or pointing out shitty local beer, or some of the infighting and gossip that plagues brewing industries everywhere. That stuff leaves a bad taste, not a good one.

But this isn’t about me. It’s really about an incredible beer culture up here, the breweries that support it, and beer lovers like you that chase the goods and keep the demand supportive. My job was easy; all of you and our brewing friends kept me in a very target-rich environment for subject matter.

At the same time, I was proud to feature Alaska beer in a national publication, Celebrator Beer News, on a bi-monthly basis, had a radio show called Dr. Fermento’s Growler Hour, and did weekly beer snippets on KBEAR for a while. I love good, local beer, and I’ll continue to use every available media format to tell people about it. The format will probably just be more word of mouth going forward. Everyone needs to know about our good beer up here, so drink it and spread the word.

I tip my wig to the people that make beer, the places that proudly feature it and push it across the counter, and the Press for believing in it enough to publish my incantations about the science, alchemy, magic, and positive social effect of beer. And, of course, I salute you, the beer aficionados that drink it and keep this industry undeniably lively. I love you all.

Do I have a replacement? Nah. That’s up to the Press. But that being said, if you’re a writer and a beer lover, chase down the opportunity. I’m sure the paper would love to hear from you.

I’ll be around. You’ll find me wherever good beer is a feature, be it a bar, restaurant, brewery, liquor store, and for sure at beer events. So when we cross paths, let’s hoist one together and celebrate everything good about the Elixir of the Gods.



Zack Lanphier, left, and Stephan Marty of Bleeding Heart Brewing Company with James 'Dr. Fermento' Roberts at right.

Q&A with Governor Candidate Bill Walker

BY JAMES BROOKS
ALASKA BEACON

How much should a governor’s faith or religion determine state law and policy?

Everyone is guided by a set of internal moral principles. For some, including Bill, those principles are rooted in religious beliefs. An individual’s religion or faith, however, should have no bearing on state law and policy. The separation of church and state is an American principle older than the republic itself and remains a cornerstone of a sound democracy.

What should the state do to improve retention of public employees, including teachers?

A recent report found that nearly 1 in 5 state jobs is vacant, and many state agencies are struggling to fill open positions. Retention of state workers is as challenging as recruitment largely because retirement benefits are weaker than the rest of the country. Making matters worse, teachers in Alaska are at a unique disadvantage because they do not receive social security benefits. Lack of a strong retirement system is a driving force in Alaska’s teacher crisis which was highlighted in another report that showed widespread teacher hiring problems across Alaska. We must reform the state retirement system as a top priority.

What does an ideal state ferry system look like?

We believe an ideal ferry system is, first and foremost, fully funded. This means a ferry system that is reliable, predictable, and fully staffed. It’s reliable, because we keep up with maintenance and replace old boats; it’s predictable, because we maintain a stable schedule that coastal communities can rely upon; and it’s fully staffed because we attract, train, and retain the best home-grown Alaska mariners. It also means we attract visitors from around the world to ride our blue canoes, with gift shops, live music, and naturalists aboard. We have always believed that a certain amount of state funding is required to maintain and operate the system, in much the same way state funding is required to maintain and

operate surface roads and highways around the state. An ideal state ferry system would be one that reaches every coastal community in Alaska and allows for the coastal communities in our state to grow economically. Easy, reliable, affordable transportation in and around our coastal communities is a missing cornerstone of Alaska’s economic growth and must be restored.

What, if any, changes does the state need to make to ensure voting is equitable and secure?

The State of Alaska has an incredibly secure voting system that helps ensure every vote is both protected and counted; this work happens with the help of the cybersecurity team at the US Department of Homeland Security.

We commit to increasing equity in voter access for rural Alaskans by continuing to remove language barriers where they exist and ensure voter precincts are sufficiently staffed, and we will continue to expand opportunities for vote-by-mail to ensure more Alaskans can vote. We commit to updating the vote-by-mail process to ensure as few ballots as possible are rejected.

What do you intend to do about the poor returns of salmon in the Yukon and Kuskokwim drainages, and what are the main causes of the problems?

No administration can wave a wand and bring fish back. However, there are things within our control. As outlined in our previous statements, on day one of a Walker Drygas administration we will take swift actions to protect and invest in our fisheries. In Western Alaska, we must first acknowledge the impacts of salmon bycatch and climate change, then appoint officials well-versed in the science to begin the necessary work to address the problems. Additionally, the State of Alaska must commit significant new research dollars to salmon science, particularly in the AYK region, while also working to secure more federal funds from programs like the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund and better using the dollars already flowing in from DC. A Walker Drygas administration will invest time and effort to build positive working relationships with indigenous fishery organizations, like the Kuskokwim and Yukon Intertribal Fish Commissions (KRITFC & YRITFC) and support



Bill Walker

clear-eyed, honest, and unbiased discussion of both the impacts AND inequities of salmon bycatch in the BSAI fisheries.

What, if any, changes should be made to Alaska’s school funding system?

We need an education endowment for pre-K through the university. Years of zero or low increases in the Base Student Allocation means our schools are, by some reports, the eighth worst in the nation.

Unfortunately, years of flat funding and modest increases for K-12 education have fallen far behind the high rates of inflation Alaska is experiencing right now, effectively creating a silent cut to education. The Walker Drygas Administration will support increases to the Base Student Allocation, the system that determines how much money schools receive for every student enrolled.

Alaska’s children deserve the best schools in the country, whether they live in a rural village or a large city. That will only happen if our education system receives reliable, predictable funding.

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- ★ INVEST IN EDUCATION
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VOTE

AUGUST

16

Paid for by Walker Drygas for Alaska, PO Box 92051, Anchorage, AK



PHOTO BY JAMES BROOKS/ALASKA BEACON

Trawlers are seen in Unalaska on Sept. 24, 2013.

Regardless of party or office, Alaska candidates are targeting trawling

Many say restrictions on deep-sea trawling are needed to protect salmon, but the science is mixed

BY JAMES BROOKS
ALASKA BEACON

Republicans, Democrats and independents seeking a variety of elected offices across Alaska appear united by a desire to restrict deep-sea trawling.

In candidate questionnaires submitted to the Alaska Beacon, candidates for statewide and legislative races — regardless of party — say the restrictions are the best way to improve salmon returns on the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.

“I support efforts to reduce the wasteful bycatch of Alaska’s seafood by Seattle-based high seas fishing corporations,” said Mary Peltola, the Democratic candidate for Alaska’s U.S. House seat.

“Science provides the best guide. However, I think most Alaskans agree it is past time to get high seas trawler bycatch under control,” said Tuckerman Babcock, a Republican candidate for an Alaska Senate district on the Kenai Peninsula.

Their comments were typical of those submitted to the Beacon, and Linda Kozak, a Kodiak fisher who has been following fisheries issues for three decades, said she’s seen a public reaction unlike anything in her career.

“For the first time in as long as I’ve been involved in fish politics, bycatch is a household name in Alaska. It’s something that the public is interested in,” she said.

Though Bristol Bay’s red-salmon fishery is enjoying a record year, fishing for king and chum salmon on the Yukon has been curtailed for a second straight summer because of low returns, leaving traditional subsistence fishermen unable to catch fish. Similar restrictions are in place on the Kuskokwim.

The low returns have been blamed on a variety of factors, including climate change, habitat destruction and bycatch, which occurs when ships catch salmon while pursuing other fish.

Bycatch occurs in every fishery that targets a specific species, but while seeking pollock and cod in a billion-dollar industry, Alaska’s trawlers inadvertently catch tens of thousands of king salmon and hundreds of thousands of chum salmon in their nets each year, according to observations by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

By law, the salmon must be returned to the ocean, but fish die in the process.

The amount of bycatch fluctuates from year to year and has fallen in the recent past, but the sheer numbers of fish caught by trawlers has aroused public ire.

A Facebook group calling itself “Stop Alaskan Trawler Bycatch” now boasts almost 20,000 members, and various groups have called on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council — which regulates fisheries more than 3 miles off Alaskan shores — to more tightly cap bycatch.

In January, the council denied an emergency action requested by several groups in

western Alaska. In June, additional requests were answered by motions to develop a working group and write a discussion paper.

Many of the salmon caught as bycatch, according to genetic studies performed by NMFS, are from Asia, British Columbia or places other than the Yukon or Kuskokwim rivers.

That fact, coupled with the fact that tighter bycatch caps could restrict pollock and cod fishing, has discouraged action.

Candidates, contined on page A19

Wick Communications Alaska

is currently recruiting for the position of a

GENERAL ASSIGNMENTS REPORTER

who can enhance our community coverage on multiple platforms. The Frontiersman publishes a print edition three times per week, and is an online daily that serves a region the size of West Virginia with more than 100,000 residents. The area is known for offering a variety of outdoor activities ranging from camping, hiking, biking and fishing in the summer, to skiing and snowmachining in the winter. **The Mat-Su** is less than an hour drive away from Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city. There are benefits of both a small town atmosphere and close proximity to the big city. In less than an hour residents can find outdoor adventure or some of Alaska’s most popular restaurants and shopping options.

We are in search of a versatile general assignments reporter with a broad skill set to add to our newsroom, and also assist with coverage in the Eagle River and Anchorage areas. Applicants must have a passion for community journalism, and the ability to offer a variety of coverage including news, features, events, sports and the outdoors. Candidates must also have the ability to shoot and edit their own photos, and assist with multimedia and social media, special projects and our daily newsletter. Preferred candidates must have at least three years of experience in print journalism, and a degree in journalism, communications or related program.

To apply, email a letter of application, resume, letters of recommendation and samples of your work to managing editor **Jeremiah Bartz** at editor@frontiersman.com.



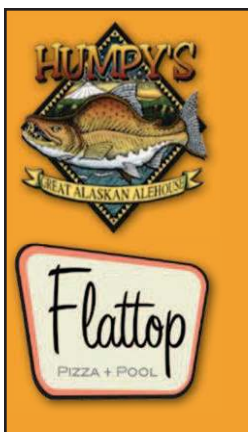
Alaska's own Hawaiian reggae band took over Williwaw on Friday. *Photos by @ShipeShots*



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Days before opening their doors, the 2022 Salmonfest sold out. Headliners Umphrey's McGee, Shakey Graves, and Rising Appalachia were joined by Alaska's best indie outfits for three days of music, fun, and of course, salmon. *Photos by @TrueNorthPhotoAK*



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Live Music Lineup!
Thursday August 11
8:30 Nothin But Karma
Friday August 12
9:30 The Jangle Bees
Saturday August 13
9:30 Nervis Rex
Tuesday August 16
8:30 Will Johnson
Wednesday August 17
8:30 Lisa Lisa & That Guy

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Super Crossword

- ACROSS
- 1 Singer Reddy

6 "Preach it!"

10 Italian Riviera city

15 At the home of, French-style

19 Muscat citizen

20 Display model

21 In the midst of

22 Plastic brick brand

23 Certain bolt

24 Spanish for "bears"

25 Ravi Shankar played it

26 As a result

27 2008 Lucasfilm sci-fi flick [TV personality]

31 — Mae (government lender)

32 Mai —

33 Part of ENT

34 Hiker's carrying bag

37 College academics overseer [actor]

44 Very busy

45 Screw up

47 Blvds., e.g.

48 Legal deg.

49 Funeral pile

50 Tangent, e.g.

52 Actor Omar of "House"

54 Singer Cole or Abdul

56 Actress Long

57 Ranch food provider [animator]

60 Teen girl, in old lingo [golfer]

62 Flavorful

63 Sch. in Manhattan

64 Harsh

65 Magic spell

69 Creditor's time of forgiveness [singer]

74 Bacon sizzle sound

75 Cost — and a leg

77 Part of ETA

78 "— bleu!" (French "Egad!")

80 "Monterey" food [singer]

84 Male gobblers [singer]

89 Western Amerind

90 Jumped

91 Illegalizes

92 "I want that now!"

93 Leaf veins

95 Pro

96 Animator's sheet

97 Tolkien fiend

100 They may bedevil dogs

101 Lace a party drink [bandleader]

105 Fourth-place finisher, say

107 Envoy's bldg.

108 Oval portion

109 Very dense element

111 What you do when you solve this puzzle?

119 Tiny fly

120 Tiger sounds

121 Went by bike, e.g.

122 Unmoving

123 Part of ENT

124 Binge

125 At the drop of —

126 Strange

127 Lyft competitor

128 Baby's bear

129 Downsides

130 Tire pattern

3 Volcano stuff

4 Full of pep

5 Dummy

6 Ornament hanger, e.g.

7 Barcelona soccer great

8 Overplayed the part

9 Have a snack

10 Fuel holders

11 Estevez of film

12 "Just say — drugs"

13 — even keel

14 In a pleasant way

15 Get resolved

16 Mr., in Munich

17 Custard components

18 Noted Bronx attraction

28 Stud money

29 States, to Macron

30 Female WWII enlistee

34 Playwright Connelly

35 Bryce Canyon locale

36 In — (as found)

38 X Games ailer

39 "Spare tire" fat

40 Screw up

41 Forest cats

42 Ones making an effort

43 Aches (for)

46 Aqua — (highly corrosive liquid)

51 Approves of

53 Show that you can download

54 Gives out in abundance, as flattery

55 Stubborn equine

58 Witty sort

59 Car financing abbr.

60 "So long!"

61 NBA nail-biters, in brief

63 It aired "Car Talk"

65 College focuses

66 How police may get info

67 Actor Derek

68 Mork's planet

70 Lead-in to "now"

71 "You are not!" reply

72 Lead-in to Nov.

73 Joanne of "My Pal Gus"

76 Roman 1,150

79 Work unit

81 Sudden temperature increase

82 Apiece

83 Fencing sword

84 After-bath application

85 .6214 mile

86 Kuwaiti chief

87 Community rec center

88 Not veiled

91 Piano seat

94 Pesky insect, informally

96 Bow of respect

98 Some aircraft engines

99 Ad award

102 Realm: Abbr.

103 In groups of two

104 Santa's laugh

106 Sight at dusk

110 Roomy car

111 Radio dial

112 Relieve

113 Vatican head

114 Fend (off)

115 — II (Gillette brand)

116 Colt's father

117 Director Kazan

118 Arctic vehicle

119 African antelope

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LEGALS

Amy and Geary York; Owners of The Cooks Nook L.L.C, is submitting an application for a new Restaurant Eating Place License, AS 04.11.100 liquor license doing business as The Dirty Apron located at 3565 Arctic Blvd Ste D3, Anchorage AK, 99503. Interested persons should submit written comment to their local governing body, the applicant, and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 West 7th Ave. Suite 1600 Anchorage AK 99501 or alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov. Anchorage Press Publish Dates 7/28/22, 8/04/22, 8/11/22

Host Chen ANC FB, LLC dba Sleeping Lady Airport Lounge located at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, 500 W. International Airport Road, Ste. C3119, Anchorage, AK 99502 is applying for transfer of a Beverage Dispensary Tourism AS 04.11.400 (d) liquor license to Delta Sky Club Alaska, LLC dba Delta Sky Club. Interested persons should submit written comment to their local governing body, the applicant, The Law Offices of Ernouf & Coffey, P.C. At P.O. Box 212314, Anchorage, Alaska 99521 and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 West 7th Ave. Suite 1600 Anchorage AK 99501 or alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov Anchorage Press Publish Dates 8/04/22, 8/11/22, 8/18/22

Momma O's Seafood MR LLC. Is making application for a new Restaurant/Eating Place AS 04.11.100 liquor license doing business as Momma O's Seafood located at 2636 Spenard Road #1 Anchorage. Interested persons should submit written comment to their local governing body, the applicant, and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 West 7th Ave. Suite 1600 Anchorage AK 99501 or alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov. Anchorage Press Publish Dates 8/11/22, 8/18/22, 8/25/22

Here’s where Alaska’s U.S. House candidates stand on access to abortion

Palin and Begich oppose congressional efforts to guarantee abortion rights, Peltola supports abortion access

BY JAMES BROOKS
ALASKA BEACON

With less than two weeks to go before Alaska’s Aug. 16 election, the three candidates seeking to temporarily replace Congressman Don Young in Alaska’s U.S. House seat have made clear their positions on abortion.

In campaign events, conversations with reporters and at public forums, Republicans Sarah Palin and Nick Begich say they support the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that allows states to ban the practice and that they oppose congressional efforts to guarantee abortion rights.

Both also say they would vote to end federal Medicaid funding that pays for abortion services in cases of rape, incest or when a woman’s life is endangered by her pregnancy.

Democratic candidate Mary Peltola, who is criss-crossing Southeast Alaska this weekend, says Congress should codify abortion rights in law and expand access to affordable birth control.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that established abortion as a constitutional right, abortion has become a major election issue across the country, including here in Alaska, where polling has repeatedly found majority support for abortion rights, despite Alaska’s reputation as a Republican state.

Peltola, Palin and Begich are on the Aug. 16 ballot twice — in a special general election that will decide who fills Alaska’s U.S. House seat from September through January, and they are among 22 candidates in a primary election that is the first step in deciding who fills the House seat for a full two-year term starting in January.

The special general election is the first that will be conducted under Alaska’s new ranked-choice voting system. Voters will be asked to pick a first choice, second choice, and a third choice among the three candidates. There’s also a fourth option for a write-in candidate.



If one candidate gets more than 50% of the first-choice votes, they win.

If no one reaches that level, the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. The votes of anyone who voted for that candidate first will instead go to their second choices. The winner will be whoever has the most votes at the end.

Voters do not have to rank their candidates and can vote for just one.

In a June candidate forum hosted by the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Peltola said, “I am in strong support of pro-choice and *Roe v. Wade*.”

“Reproductive rights are as personal of an issue as you can possibly get,” she said. “This is one area I do not believe the federal government — or for that matter the state government — has say-so: in your personal body.”

Peltola and Palin reiterated their positions in questionnaires submitted to the Alaska Beacon in late July.

Begich did not answer a questionnaire, but in a Wednesday appearance on a radio show hosted by Alaskan Independence Party chairman Bob Bird, Begich said he no longer supports the current version of the federal

Hyde Amendment, which allows federal funding for Medicaid to pay for abortion services in cases of rape, incest, or if a woman’s life is endangered by pregnancy.

More than one in three Alaskans receive health care through Medicaid.

In Alaska, the state government pays for other abortions that providers have determined are medically necessary. Rulings from the Alaska Supreme Court have guaranteed those payments and abortion rights in general.

Begich’s campaign manager, Truman Reed, said Begich supports allowing abortions in those cases but opposes federal funding for them.

“Nick’s position has been consistent from the start,” Reed said. “He is pro-life with allowance for the life of the mother, incest and rape. He steadfastly opposes the use of federal funds for abortion services.”

Palin has said she opposes federal funding for abortion services but has not explicitly stated whether she supports laws allowing abortions for life-endangerment reasons, rape or incest.

Her campaign website states, “There is never an acceptable excuse for deliberately taking a human life, and we must not allow our society to become complicit in such crimes.”

Palin’s youngest child, Trig, was born with Down syndrome and diagnosed before his birth.

“I have a son with special needs. I was given that option, of course, to end his life before it really began. I was scared to death. It was the biggest challenge I’ve ever faced,” Palin said in June at the Anchorage chamber forum.

Speaking to that audience, she said that what seems like a challenge can be an opportunity.

“I know there’s purpose in his life. I know there’s a reason he was born,” she said.

The ranked-choice election is on one side of the ballot; on the other is the primary election featuring the 22 candidates for the full U.S. House term.

Voters will be asked to pick one candidate, and the four candidates who receive the most votes will advance to a ranked-choice vote Nov. 8.

Republican Tara Sweeney missed the cutoff for the special election but is considered likely to be among the four candidates for the regular primary.

Answering the Beacon’s questionnaire, she said she supports a woman’s right to choose and “would support a straight codification of *Roe v. Wade*. I do not believe that the federal government should have a role in a woman’s healthcare decisions. That decision is between a woman and her medical provider.”

She went on to say that she does not support using federal funding for abortions, similar to Palin and Begich.

Libertarian candidate Chris Bye, also running in the primary, said he believes the Supreme Court ruling that overturned *Roe v. Wade* is “good for governance. It places the decision on states, and therefore the voters, where it should have been all along.”

He did not answer a question asking whether he would vote in favor of a bill that codifies abortion rights in law but said that contraception and other medicines should be available for all people without a doctor’s prescription.

Super Crossword

Answers

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601 W. Dimond
(907) 349-3712
7141 Jewel lake Rd
(907) 243-0749



ARIES: Tips to get the most out of the coming weeks: 1. Exercise your willpower at random moments just to keep it limber. 2. Be adept at fulfilling your own hype. 3. Argue for fun. Be playful and frisky as you banter. Disagree for the sport of it, without feeling attached to being right or needing the last word. 4. Be unable to understand how anyone can resist you or not find you alluring. 5. Declare yourself President of Everything, then stage a coup d'état. 6. Smile often when you have no reason to. 7. If you come upon a “square peg, round hole” situation, change the shape of the hole.

TAURUS: If I had to choose a mythic deity to be your symbolic helper, I would pick Venus. The planet Venus is ruler of your sign, and the goddess Venus is the maven of beauty and love, which are key to your happiness. But I would also assign Hephaestus to you Tauruses. He was the Greek god of the metalworking forge. He created Zeus’s thunderbolts, Hermes’ winged helmet, Aphrodite’s magic bra, Achilles’ armor, Eros’ bow and arrows, and the thrones for all the deities in Olympus. The things he made were elegant and useful. I nominate him to be your spirit guide during the next ten months. May he inspire you to be a generous source of practical beauty.

GEMINI: To be a true Gemini, you must yearn for knowledge—whether it’s about coral reefs, ancient maps of Sumer, sex among jellyfish, mini-black holes, your friends’ secrets, or celebrity gossip. You need to be an eternal student who craves education. Are some things more important to learn than others? Of course, but that gauge is not always apparent in the present. A seemingly minor clue or trick you glean today may become unexpectedly helpful a month from now. With that perspective in mind, I encourage you to be promiscuous in your lust for new information and teachings in the coming weeks.

CANCERIAN: Cancerian drummer Ringo Starr is in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Though he has received less acclaim than his fellow Beatles, many critics recognize him as a skillful and original drummer. How did he get started? At age 13, he contracted tuberculosis and lived in a sanatorium for two years. The medical staff encouraged him to join the hospital band, hoping it would stimulate his motor skills and alleviate boredom. Ringo used a makeshift mallet to bang the cabinet near his bed. Good practice! That’s how his misfortune led to his joy and success. Is there an equivalent story in your life, Cancerian? The coming months will be a good time to take that story to its next level.

LEO: One of the inspiring experiments I hope you will attempt in the coming months is to work on loving another person as wildly and deeply and smartly as you love yourself. In urging you to try this exercise, I don’t mean to imply that I have a problem with you loving yourself wildly and deeply and smartly. I endorse your efforts to keep increasing the intensity and ingenuity with which you adore and care for yourself. But here’s a secret: Learning to summon a monumental passion for another soul may have the magic power of enhancing your love for yourself.

VIRGO: Musician Viv Albertine has recorded four albums and played guitar for the Slits, a famous punk band. She has also written two books and worked as a TV director for 20 years. Her accomplishments are impressive. Yet she also acknowledges that she has spent a lot of time in bed for many reasons: needing to rest, seeking refuge to think and meditate, recovering from illness, feeling overwhelmed or lonely or sad. She admirably cites other creative people who, like her, have worked in their beds: Emily Dickinson, Patti Smith, Edith Sitwell, and Frida Kahlo. I mention this, Virgo, because the coming days will be an excellent time for you to seek sanctuary and healing and creativity in bed.

LIBRA: Libran author Katherine Mansfield wrote, “The mind I love must have wild places, a tangled orchard where dark damsons drop in the heavy grass, an overgrown little wood, the chance of a snake or two, and a pool that nobody’s fathomed the depth of.” Be inspired by her in the coming weeks, Libra. I suspect you will flourish if you give yourself the luxury of exploring your untamed side. The time is ripe to wander in nature and commune with exciting influences outside your comfort zone. What uncharted frontier would you enjoy visiting?

SCORPIO: When you are functioning at your best, you Scorpios crave only the finest, top-quality highs. You embrace joys and pleasures that generate epiphanies and vitalizing transformations. Mediocre varieties of fun don’t interest you. You avoid debilitating indulgences that provide brief excitement but spawn long-term problems. In the coming weeks, dear Scorpio, I hope you will embody these descriptions. It’s crucial that you seek gratifications and delectations that uplift you, ennoble you, and bless your future.

SAGITTARIUS: “Wish on everything,” advises Sagittarian author Francesca Lia Block. “Pink cars are good, especially old ones. And first stars and shooting stars. Planes will do if they are the first light in the sky and look like stars. Wish in tunnels, holding your breath and lifting your feet off the ground. Birthday candles. Baby teeth.” Your homework during the next two weeks, Sagittarius, is to build a list of further marvels that you will wish on. It’s the Magic Wish season of the year for you: a time when you’re more likely than usual to encounter and generate miracles. Be proactive! Oh, and very important: What are your three top wishes?

CAPRICORN: Author Aldous Huxley wrote, “That people do not learn much from the lessons of history is the most important lesson that history has to teach.” While his observation is true much of the time, I don’t think it will be so for you in the coming weeks. I suspect you will triumph over past patterns that have repeated and repeated themselves. You will study your life story and figure out what you must do to graduate from lessons you have finally, completely learned.

AQUARIUS: In the film *I Origins*, a scientist says this to a lover: “When the Big Bang happened, all the atoms in the universe were smashed together into one little dot that exploded outward. So my atoms and your atoms were together then . . . my atoms have always known your atoms.” Although this sounds poetic, it’s true in a literal sense: The atoms that compose you and me and everyone else were originally all squeezed together in a tiny space. We knew each other intimately! The coming days will be an excellent time to celebrate your fundamental link with the rest of the universe. You’ll be extra receptive to feeling connection. You’ll be especially adept at fitting your energy together with others’. You’ll love the sensation of being united, merged, blended.

PISCES: “Every time I meet someone who was born within like two weeks of my birthday, I end up with the impression that they are the loopyest and wisest person I’ve met in a long time. They are totally ridiculous and worthy of profound respect. They are unhinged and brilliantly focused. They are fuzzy-headed dreamers and lyrical thinkers who charm me with their attunement to the world’s beauty and impress me with their understanding of how the world works. Luckily for me, I know the fool is sacred.”



DAN SAVAGE’S SAVAGE LOVE

This is a preview of this week’s Savage Love. The full version is now exclusively available on Dan’s website [savage.love](#).

I have a question about choking. Or should that be simulated choking? I’ve recently discovered that being pinned down by my neck is a huge turn on for me. I love the feeling of being dominated and controlled, and of feeling my partner’s strength on this part of my body. I’m much more interested in this feeling than in actual breath control or oxygen deprivation. I’ve been reading up on choking because I’m trying to make sure I can be manhandled in the way I like as safely as possible. However, all the advice about choking is about how dangerous it is. But most of the advice concentrates on the dangers of restricting oxygen (which is not what I am going for) or on damaging the windpipe by putting pressure on the front of the throat (which my partners avoid). So, my question is... how dangerous is this kind of simulated choking play really? Play where one person is being held down by their throat with only mild pressure? What can we do to make it as safe as possible? I’m having a hard time finding good answers, and given how wet this makes my pussy, abstaining from this activity is not an option for me.

- Please I Need More Expertise

“Choking and other forms of breath play used to be very uncommon,” said Dr. Debby Herbenick. “But over the past decade, choking has become extremely common, especially among people under 40.”

Dr. Herbenick is a professor at Indiana University School of Public Health, a prolific and widely published sex researcher, and the author of many books, including *The Coregasm Workout: The Revolutionary Method for Better Sex Through Exercise*. A few years ago, Dr. Herbenick’s students began asking her about choking, with some sharing harrowing stories of being choked by sex partners without their consent. There was very little data out there about choking, which was all over porn sites, and that inspired Dr. Herbenick and some colleagues to undertake the first serious and scientifically rigorous studies of sexual choking.

Disturbingly, Dr. Herbenick found that a lot of people—mostly male people—were choking their partners during sex without discussing it first. Meaning, they weren’t establishing mutual interest, they weren’t obtaining unambiguously enthusiastic consent, and they weren’t discussing the inherent risks and how to minimize them. (Minimize ≠ eliminate.) Many weren’t even cognizant of the risks, which makes sense given the dearth of research on choking (and, again, why Dr. Herbenick has been researching this now-mainstream practice).

“The reason that so many sites say choking is dangerous is because it is dangerous,” said Dr. Herbenick. “That’s not a scare tactic. Although rare, people do occasionally die from being choked, which is technically a form of strangulation, and people have gone to jail for accidentally injuring or killing a partner during consensual choking.”

Most people who’ve experimented with choking describe the act as “consensual, wanted, and pleasurable,” according to Dr. Herbenick’s research. Which raises another concern: the false sense of security many have about it.

“Because most people experiment with choking without any obvious negative repercussions, they often think they’re doing it ‘safely,’ and that may not be the case,” said Dr. Herbenick. “And because people sometimes engage in choking frequently, there may be cumulative effects on the brain—in other words, negative effects that build up over time rather than from a single incident of being choked. Cumulative incidents are difficult to notice as they’re happening. However, even mild pressure on the neck/throat is likely to reduce oxygen to the brain because it involves compressing blood vessels. The kinds of cumulative effects that may occur include greater likelihood of depression, anxiety, ringing in the ears, headaches, and memory issues, among others, though we need more research to say for sure.”

So, is there a safe way to create the sensation of being choked—or pinned down by your neck—without the risk?

“Some people who are into choking but who don’t want to take on these risks ask their partner to lightly press against their collarbone but not their throat,” said Dr. Herbenick. “And PINME is correct that any pressure to the front of the throat is particularly risky, given how vulnerable the windpipe is to injury. Other people decide to ask their partner to choke them anyway but only rarely, to reduce the likelihood of cumulative risk.”

Obviously, consent to a sex practice as risky as choking is only meaningful if everyone involved is fully informed of the risks. Which means you, PINME, have a duty to fully inform your partner of the risks they’ll be running if they agree to choke you.

“It’s not fair to put someone in the position of doing something that could accidentally hurt or kill you, and making them potentially criminally or legally responsible, without their full understanding of the risks they’re taking,” said Dr. Herbenick. “All that said, adults can consent and opt into all sorts of risky things—flogging, barebacking, sex with strangers, unprotected vaginal intercourse after forgetting a week’s worth of birth control pills, skydiving, rock climbing, and various watersports. Whatever risky activity we enjoy—whether it involves sex or not—we need to learn about potential risks, think through potential harm reduction strategies, and proceed with caution.”

And what would harm reduction and/or worst-case-scenario reduction strategies look like where erotic choking was concerned?

“If mild pressure is being used, PINME needs to make sure she can fully breathe, speak, has a safe word AND gesture—in case she does lose ability to speak—and that her desire for mild pressure—very mild pressure—is clearly understood by her partner,” said Dr. Herbenick. “Further, if PINME starts to experience visual changes, light-headedness, dizziness, or euphoria, then that suggests she is likely experiencing lower oxygen levels and potential neurological effects.”

And that’s definitely a moment when you’ll want to use your safeword or gesture, PINME, while you still can.

CANNAGUIDE

YOUR MAP TO ANCHORAGE'S DANK SIDE



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“The best available scientific information indicates that Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery comprises less than three percent and chum salmon bycatch comprises less than one percent of the returns to Western Alaska river systems. Closure of the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery in 2022 is unlikely to result in meeting escapement goals or substantively increase the likelihood of improving subsistence and commercial harvests in 2022,” said Janet Coit, assistant administrator for fisheries at the National Marine Fisheries Service, in January.

Les Gara, the Democratic candidate for governor, said that if elected, he would “nominate (North Pacific) Council members who’d protect our fisheries from this vastly excessive Outside factory trawler ‘bycatch,’ which decimates Alaska fish and crab, and harms our fish runs.”

“Subsistence, commercial and sport access for recreational fishing are all critical aspects of Alaska’s fishing policies,” said Charlie Pierce, a Republican candidate for governor. “A common issue that affects all areas is the trawler bycatch problem. Ending Alaskan trawler bycatch will reduce the pressure on all Alaskan fishing concerns in the state.”

In late 2021, following a legislative hearing on bycatch, incumbent Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy set up a task force to offer recommendations.

That group is expected to deliver those recommendations after the election. In the meantime, Dunleavy said, it’s best to reserve judgment.

“Certainly, on the Yukon, kings and chums — something is happening related to that river system, and we need to uncover exactly what it is and try and figure this out,” Dunleavy said this month.

Incumbent Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski has also called for additional studies and research. Writing to the Beacon, she did not discuss bycatch. Murkowski’s lead challenger, Republican Kelly Tshibaka, did not respond to the Beacon’s questionnaire.

Independent governor candidate Bill Walker said that no administration can wave a wand and bring fish back to the rivers, but there are steps to take.

“In Western Alaska, we must first acknowledge the impacts of salmon bycatch and climate change, then appoint officials well-versed in the science to begin the necessary work to address the problems,” he said.

College Bound or Bust

Dear Oskar,
My daughter was meant to go to college this fall but has decided she will move to another state instead and get a job. I am so afraid she’ll never find her way if she doesn’t attend college. College is how people get better jobs and better lives. What can I do to help her?
—College Bound or Bust



ASK OSKAR
BY OSKAR SAVILLE

Dear College Bound or Bust,

I understand your concern. You want the best for your child, and that in itself is a beautiful thing to want for anyone. But the truth is, everyone must find their own way. There are no wrong ways in life. Every turn we take always leads us to the same place: home, our own North Star.

It’s like this: Last week, I stood at the top of an 8,321 foot mountain looking at a map that showed all possible trails down. Some of the trails had the option to connect to different trails. Some trails were longer, some shorter. Some trails were harder and some easier, but in the end, they all led to the same place: the bottom.

My friend and I chose a trail with my kids that felt right for us. As we walked down, we passed a couple who were wearing traditional hiking gear. My kids and I were dressed as if we were walking down any regular street. Instead of a hiking backpack, I carried a simple bag over my shoulder, filled with sandwiches, snacks, and not enough water. My shoes (unfortunately) had no traction on them. My friend, on the other hand, was wearing proper hiking clothes.

Along the way, we stopped to notice the

flowers, played music on a phone to add a soundtrack to our view, sat down in a shady spot to eat, played games, looked at more flowers, and laughed a lot. One of my daughters even gave me a small bouquet. It was magical, like something out of a movie

Although it was amazing, my little “Am I getting it wrong voice?” chimed in: “Why hadn’t I worn better shoes?” “Were my kid’s shoes o.k.?” “It’s 90 degrees out, how could I have not brought enough water?” “Are we lost? Where are the signs?” While that voice may seem helpful, it was not only not necessary but it also was taking away from my experience of joy. I acknowledged my inner fear and reminded myself—as I would a fearful, small child—that we were o.k. and all was well. Not long after, we came upon a waterfall. It was cold and refreshing. We refilled our bottles and cooled off our faces. As we continued along the trail, our shoes worked just fine—maybe a little slippery at times, but nothing outrageous that stopped us from making it down.

I have no doubt that other people on the mountain who had conventional hiking gear also made it to the end of the trail. I also trust that they had as much fun as we did, maybe at moments they also felt they were going the wrong way.

When people in hospice have been asked the question, “What would you have done differently in your life?”, no one answers, “Get it right.” Their answers are that they wish they would have loved more, worried less, been happier, taken risks, and lived their dreams.”

It sounds like your daughter is taking a risk and living her life as she dreams it. Let’s trust that she gets the job that is right for her, goes happily down the mountain, and if need be, she will change trails as many times as she desires. Only she can walk her journey and understand that true self-love is finding your own way.

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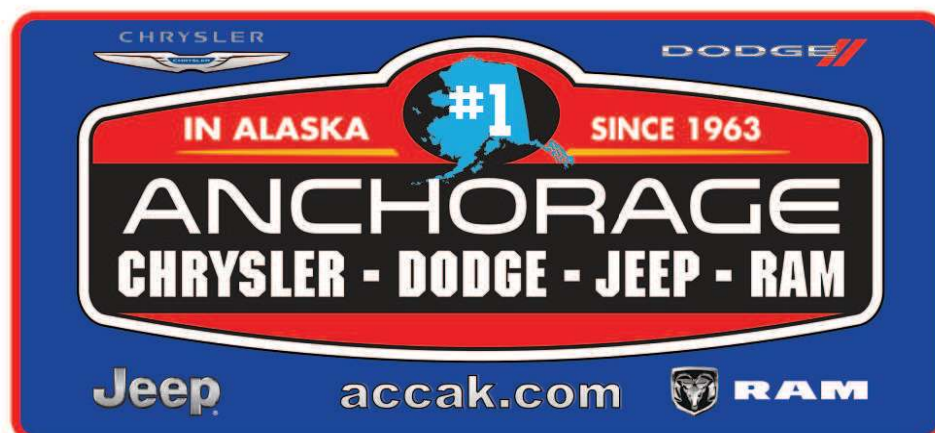


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