

The long goodbye: Student journalists run final issue in historic location

Story and photos by Jeremia Schrock

Ashleigh Strange, standing, was the political reporter last year. Lakeidra Chavis, seated, held that position the previous year, having inherited it from Jeremia Schrock, who wrote this story.

Of reporters and Slinkies

“Don’t ever throw a Slinky at me again,” says Lakeidra Chavis. Chavis is the copy editor for the *Sun Star*, UAF’s student-run paper. She’s talking to colleague Ashleigh Strange, who covers the campus political beat. Strange has taken a break from writing her final story for the paper, a recap of the latest student government meeting. That’s well and good for Strange, but it’s 8:30 p.m., and Chavis is just flat hungry.

Typing at a corner desk is arts and entertainment writer John Seiler. Seiler is sticking around to finish homework and help read over the issue before it’s sent off to the printer. Sitting kitty-corner to Seiler is Fernanda Chamorro, the photo editor.



Over at the layout computer, layout editor Danny Fisher has finally started working on the cover. Both she and Editor-in-Chief Erika Roohi decide to go with an Instagram photo of a snow-covered campus. It’s a nice photo and one taken by a student, but Roohi doesn’t like the fact that it’s from Instagram.

Roohi is also tired of Chavis talking about being hungry.

“This is what happens when you try and do an issue during finals week,” Roohi says.

What makes this night, May 5, unique among the many these students have spent in this office isn’t that this issue is the last issue of the year, but that it’s the last issue that will be published within the whitewashed walls of Room 101G in the William R. Wood Center. The room, with its old couches and newer Macs, has seen hundreds of aspiring journalists come and go. This is the last batch it will ever see. Over the summer, this section of the Wood Center will be demolished, making way for an expansion to be finished by 2014.

The written word

Journalism has always been about telling stories. The stories of many UAF students are told through the *Sun Star*. Since 1972, the newspaper’s home has been inside Wood Center. That is about to change. While the future of the paper is still unwritten, a significant chapter in its saga has ended.

The story of that last night is about the written word, but it’s also about the people who do the writing. And the editing. About those who lay out the paper and proof its pages prior to print. It’s also about bad jokes, food, YouTube and camaraderie.

“Someone once told me Editor-in-Chief is one of the hardest jobs on campus. I guess I’m coming at it with a little bit of bias, but I’d believe it,” wrote Roohi that night, in her last editorial. “The late nights of trying and failing to catch all the errors, dealing with all the haters out there who want to see the *Sun Star* fail, working with a woefully inadequate budget and getting the small staff of reporters and photographers to get their work done wore me out this year.”

Doughnuts and sympathy

It’s 9:45 p.m. and the copyediting is finally finished. A feat, considering the last piece of content wasn’t turned in until less than an hour ago. The team, bemoaning the usual Sunday fare of caffeine and sugar,



finally agrees to open up a box of doughnuts sitting on Fisher's desk. They eat them begrudgingly.

As 10 p.m. rolls around, Fisher finishes layout. She prints out the pages and hands them to Roohi, who in turn spreads them among herself and the team. Each has a pen and begins to check for duplicated sentences, typos or any other errors.

Proofing a page for a newspaper is strange, both in what one hears and in what one sees. "Is moon base one word or two?" asks Strange, to no one in particular. (It's two). Any errors that are found are circled or underlined in red, empty white space is doodled in, the margins of pages are littered with notes, and when a page is completed it's given a large check mark at the top.

By 11 p.m., the proofing is almost finished. "Last one!" Roohi shouts, her voice mixed with both glee and exhaustion. Ten minutes later, Roohi hands the last page to Fisher, who puts the final changes into the computer.

The tired students begin to gather their things. There are no lingering glances into the office. Tomorrow the team will be back to finish packing up the room. Written across the walls are drawings and quotes. Some funny, some sad. In front of Fisher's desk is a drawing of a giant octopus spread out across a city. Alongside the octopus are the words "Sun Star for Lyfe ... Literally."

"This is the last issue," Roohi wrote in her last editorial, "and also an end of an era for the Sun Star." 🐙



John Seiler, journalism major and entertainment writer, works on his Spoiler Alert column for the Sun Star.

Jeremia Schrock is the communications coordinator for the Downtown Association of Fairbanks. He enjoys discussing World War II, watching samurai films and listening to jazz. He studied history at UAF and worked for the *Sun Star* from 2010 – 2012. Schrock can be found online at www.downtownfairbanks.com and www.alaskacommons.com.

The Nanook Nook showcases the talent of our alumni and students. If you have an original poem, essay, short story, artwork or photograph(s) you would like to share with our readers, contact aurora.magazine@alaska.edu for submission guidelines.

CLASS NOTES

1960s

Robert J. (Bob) Conti, '67, retired from 35 years of pastoring churches in New York and 15 years at Sound of Life Radio, where he served as general manager, COO and announcer. He and his wife, **AnnaLee Cousart, '67**, live in Beacon, N.Y., just across the Hudson River from their son and five grandchildren.



◀ **AnnaLee Cousart, '67** — "My most recent book, *Till the Storm Passes By*, the first novel in my Alaskan Waters Trilogy, has been published in e-book and trade paperback by Ambassador International. My

experiences growing up in Alaska in the '50s and '60s heavily inform my writing of this book, which is set in the Alaska Panhandle in 1953. While showcasing the scenic beauty of Alaska, I dramatize the destructiveness of family secrets, as well as the redemption and healing

that can only come through forgiveness. I have also published numerous short stories, articles, devotionals, church school curriculum, and a nonfiction book, *Frontiers of Faith*, which recounts the adventures of my grandparents as pioneer missionaries to Alaska, 1917 – 1982. To learn more about my books, go to www.annaleeconti.com or www.amazon.com."

1970s

Milo Griffin, '70, received a JP Jones Legacy Award at Fairbanks' inaugural Black History Month's Men of Distinction event in February 2013. He has worked as a teacher and coach at Lathrop High School for more than 30 years.

Pat Cole, '72, received the 2012 Vic Fisher Municipal Employee Award from the city of Fairbanks for his commitment to excellence.

Jerry Cleworth, '75, mayor of Fairbanks, was named the 2012 Elected Official of the Year by the Alaska Municipal League at its annual conference in Anchorage.

Joan Braddock, '77, '83, interim director of the University of Alaska Press, is vice chair of the Alaska Humanities Forum's executive committee.

Jim Culley, '78, is vice president of and a commercial loan officer for Northrim Bank in Fairbanks.

1980s

Randy Weaver, '82, was appointed by Gov. Sean Parnell to the Alaska Student Loan Corp. board in November 2012.

Thomas McKenna, '84, was elected president of the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians. He is the director of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Madison.

Darryl Lewis, '88, received a JP Jones Industry Leadership Award in media at Fairbanks' inaugural Black History Month's Men of Distinction event in February 2013.

Susan "K'etso" Jones Paskvan, '88, won the Culture Bearer Award for her work in teaching and preserving a Native language.