**Longtime KUAC volunteer shares passion for meaningful music**

By Nancy Tarnai

As a KUAC volunteer since 1990, Leone Hatch thinks of herself as a conduit for what she considers noteworthy.

Listeners will recognize Hatch from “Postcards” on KUAC FM. The program, produced at the University of Alaska Fairbanks studio, works to bring the perfect feel to Sunday evenings, hitting the right balance between familiar and undiscovered music from home and abroad.

Music and radio have always played a prominent role in Hatch’s life. Growing up in suburban Milwaukee, she listened to Top 40 songs and maintained a huge record collection. In between studying for a bachelor’s degree in environmental psychology at the University of Michigan and earning a law degree at the University of Oregon, Hatch worked as a bartender, slinging drinks to the melody of popular tunes.

Once Hatch came to Alaska in 1984, she knew she wanted to stay. While working for an Alaska Superior Court judge in Sitka, she volunteered at public radio station KCAW. Admitting to shyness, she had to challenge herself to host a show called “Sunday Thymes.”

“It was public speaking without people of front of me, so I could do it,” she said. Even after all these years, she said, “I’m still shy, but I’m good with a microphone. I find it personally rewarding.”

After a stint in Anchorage, Hatch relocated to Fairbanks to work in the state attorney general’s office. Wanting to get back into public radio, she found her way to KUAC, hosting “Monday Blues” for a couple of years. The late-night program didn’t mesh with her day job and she eventually landed the “Postcards” slot.

“I love doing radio,” she said. “It’s creative; it’s useful; it’s helpful to people to have auditory diversity. And radio builds community.”

Being a good radio program host requires an interest in music and in people. “The other skills come to you,” she said. “I just try to touch others with what has touched me.”

KUAC volunteer coordinator Lori Neufeld believes that has definitely worked in Hatch’s case.

“Leone is a volunteer coordinator's dream,” she said. “She makes listeners feel close and part of the community on any given Sunday evening with her easy-going style and musical picks.”

In the beginning, Hatch’s program featured female acoustic singer-songwriters, but Hatch found this too limiting and added non-acoustic music and male voices. Down the road, blues crept in, followed by world music and even popular music.

“I look for something lyrical in a poetic sense,” she said. “It’s not about a particular genre or artist, it’s more a search for connection. I like to slip in socially relevant content without being overwhelming. I love music that has something to say and says it in a beautiful way.”

Although Hatch loves music, she has made only low-key attempts at playing steel drums, ukulele and guitar. Yet music and her KUAC program are on her mind most of the time.

Hatch recalled travels where she was always listening for music to feature on “Postcards.” “I can’t emphasize enough how having a radio program has deepened my travel experiences,” she said. “I don’t travel as much as I used to, but music brings me to places where people think differently, yet we are all under the same stars.”

Now retired, Hatch said she has had to drop extracurricular activities at times, but never KUAC. “I want to stay with KUAC and keep my radio program,” she said.

“Postcards” airs at 6 p.m. Sundays on KUAC 89.9 FM.

Nancy Tarnai is marketing and communications manager at KUAC public broadcasting. She can be reached at 907-474-2890 or nancy.kuac@alaska.edu.

Cutline:

*Photo courtesy of KUAC
Leone Hatch is the host of "Postcards" on KUAC 89.9 FM. In addition to hosting a radio show, she helps welcome volunteers to the studio during pledge drives by donning a tiara.*