KUEUIT AURORA

February 2013

Gene Brown played trumpet in the Navy for seven years before going into banking.

During his Navy years he began writing short stories and continues to write for the pleasure of friends and family.

Having retired from 'real' work in 2006 and a widower since 2008, Gene now plays trumpet in several local swing and jazz bands and is working on an historical novel about Japan, his wife's homeland.

His family owned the flying school at Merrill Field in the late '40s, where he was a frequent passenger in a Super Cub.

Find Gene's short story, Life At the Jesse Lee Home, in it's entirety in the newsletter section of our website, www.baltoschool.net.

Photo: Chuck Tharp, circa 1950. With gratitude to Verna Tharp and Jackie Pels for its use.

EARLY LESSONS AT THE JESSE LEE

When I was perhaps eight, in 1949, my parents were active in the Methodist church and accepted positions as houseparents in the boys' dorm of the Jesse Lee Home. Our family moved from Anchorage to Seward, and my two older brothers and I lived with the other boys at the Home.

Only my oldest brother, Skip, then eighteen and too old to be a "boy" at the dorm, was exempt from dorm life. My next older brother, Dick, was fifteen and lived as an "A" boy. The brother next to me, Ernie, was eleven and was with the "B" boys. At my age, I was a "C" boy.

Although our parents were the dorm parents, we lived in the dorms just like the orphan boys, ate at the Home dining room with all the resident boys and girls, and did all the chores done by the other boys in the dorms. I was accepted as one of them from the very beginning.

The Home was as self-sufficient as possible, with a large vegetable garden and the normal edible farm animals – pigs, chicken, beef – that were for the Home's use as well as for sale in Seward.

A group of us children – "C" boys and girls mostly – were playing out near Walter, the bull. We were not supposed to be near the bull because we would taunt him and he "may break through the fence" and harm us. Or so we are told by the older "B" boys. But here we were. And we heard the bell ringing us in for lunch.

We had barely minutes to get into the dormitories, wash our hands, and line up for the march down the long hallway to the dining room: girls marching in from the one side and boys marching in from the other. Of course, the girls' side is the closest to the bull, so we boys must run all the faster to be on time for lunch.

I was a fast runner. Faster than any other boy, and certainly faster than all the girls. As I streaked towards the dormitory's back door I went across, and not around, the kitchen's underground boiler room. The room's roof rises above ground by only inches so it's an easy step up for a young boy who is the home's fastest "C" boy!

The boiler's one-inch galvanized steel relief pipe sticks straight up from the center of the roof, and at about forty inches above the rooftop it turns at a ninety degree angle and goes through the kitchen wall seven or eight feet away.

Speeding across the roof I turned to look over my shoulder at the other children – smug in my leading position – and turned back around just in time to SMACK! into the pipe with my upper lip. BAM! THUMP! Out cold!

Of course I spent a couple of days in bed in the dormitory houseparent's room while my lip healed. And was treated ever so kindly for my injury.

No one ever asked why I was running from the bull's pen.

Alaska Legislature Takes a Field Trip

Some things are worth preserving.

Not because they're old, but because they represent the stories that have framed the arc of our lives.

Ben Williams

Members of the Alaska State Legislature, hopefuls running for the Legislative seats, key staff, and special guests descended on Seward the day after Labor Day to celebrate 100 years of the City's incorporation.

Seward's Birthday Party was sponsored by the Friends of Jesse Lee Home, and filled with behind-the-scenes tours of state funded Seward projects.

Premier Tours donated a motor coach and driver, while a few participants like Senator Cathy Giessel and Speaker of the House Mike Chenault, and Senator Mark Begich's staffer Greer Geher elected to push through the hurricane force winds and driving rain of the Turnagain Arm in their own vehicle.

Christo's Palace donated lunch for the travelers, who enjoyed prime beluga whale watching and an educational tour from retired school teacher - professional tour director Beth Gamel on their way down.

Once they arrived, guests were split into small groups so they could experience the intimate, personal, hands-on learning that will become the hallmark of the Balto School.

John "Mac" Eads did double duty as Seward tour guide, Flood Board member, historian, and color commentator as he demonstrated the difficult flood situation in the Seward area, which has experienced unfulfilled Legislative funding requests in the past on the way to a tour of the Bear Creek Fire Hall facility and equipment.

Tara Jones walked tours to the bowels of the Alaska SeaLife Center to show off the new seawater heat exchanger which she hopes will soon have the facility weaned off of fuel oil.

The need for the stranded animal program wasn't lost on those participating in the tour, nor the depth and breath of the research conducted there.

"I had no idea how big ASLC was, and how much they did there. It is very impressive," remarked Senator Mark Begich staffer Greer Geher.

"It was an enjoyable and educational experience to tour the Jesse Lee Home in Seward with fellow legislators," suggested Representative Dan Saddler.

"It is encouraging that a place that was once a home of refuge for young Alaska Natives might find new life as a home for collaborative learning and leadership for a new generation of Alaskans."

A Historical Renovation

The Friends of Jesse Lee Home (FJLH) have been building a strong foundation for the renovation of the complex.

A site survey was completed last year, as well as three dimensional modeling.

This data is proving to be invaluable as it not only demonstrates the way the building walls have moved and settled, but also confirms exact measurements and angles in a way that our as-built survey wasn't capable of providing.

Dowl HKM completed an All-Appropriate Inquiry/Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment. It's finding was, "This assessment has revealed no evidence of recognized environmental conditions in connection with the Subject Property."

The Friends of Jesse Lee Home Board was comforted by the news, but still remains concerned that fuel tanks may be hiding beneath the lovely chocolate lilies that cover the grounds in the summer.

Project architects Kumin & Associates have completed the concept design. Angela Barr, AIA is the lead architect on the JLH project. As an owner and principal-in-charge at Kumin she has worked on projects from the Arctic Circle to the South Pole and is an expert at arctic design. We are hoping that expertise results in substantially lower energy costs than experienced in the past.

Barr's list of past projects includes several award-winning schools.

Kumin's design team, the Board of Directors, and the Academic Advisory Committee physically walked through the buildings to determine what activities would happen in each space. Following, Kumin put pencil to paper to complete the concept design.

"Most of it was a no brainer," explains Chairman of the Board Dorene Lorenz. "Since our concept is very similar to the historic use many of the spaces will retain their previous duty. We do have to provide consideration to modern accessibility and safety needs - elevators, emergency exits and the like, and at times that has been challenging."

The Friends entered into the 35% design phase contract with Kumin & Associates in December.

"We were very pleased with what Kumin brought to the table in the early design stages," suggested Lorenz. "They were thoughtful and contemplative in their approach. They are being gentle with the old girl, and creative in their problem solving. The relationship between client and architect is a make it or break it one in the success of a project, and thus far we are all like minded."

Al Bryant, AIA LEED AP, of BergerABAM has been contracted as the project's historic architect under Kumin, to ensure the project's overall compliance with the US Department of the Interior - Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

Bryant has special expertise in education facilities and historic preservation projects. He has worked on the campuses of the University of Washington on nearly 40 major renovation and expansion projects.

Bryan's commitment to historical preservation and adaptive reuse is reflected in his past chairmanship of the Seattle American Institute of Architects (AIA) Historical Preservation/Reuse Professional Interest Areas Committee. He is also an active member of the national AIA Historic Resource Committee.

BergerABAM is working with Kumin to develop a long-term sustainable model, providing project management oversight for the historic restoration, and assisting the FJLH in the application for a 20 percent historic tax credit from the Internal Revenue Service.

The Historic Tax credit program is a non-competitive grant that is expected bring in from $1.2-2.4 million towards the funding of this project. Qualifying for the full $2.4 million is dependent on municipal exemptions.

Nationally recognized expert Joel Cohn, CPA, a principal at the Reznick Group, has been retained to assist the Friends in negotiating the complicated waters of structuring tax credit transactions to meet the needs of the project while staying within the framework of existing tax law.

A detailed purchase agreement was submitted to the City attorney and Administration in December 2012. The agreement included specific stipulations of what the ownership requirements are for the tax credit funding streams.

In 2001, the Peninsula Clarion reported that the Home's former owner failed to make utility payments.

"State law would allow the borough to deed the property to the City after the foreclosure process is completed. But the City doesn't appear to be interested in assuming liability for the property, nor does it have the resources to develop it, said City Manager Scott Janke" at the time.

The City used $50,000 from the Exxon Valdez settlement to erect a fence to mitigate risk and discourage vandalism, and then started lobbying.

At the request of the Seward City Council, Representative Ken Lancaster, R-Soldotna introduced House Bill 96. The Bill tasked the State Division of Parks to figure out how the State might develop and manage the property.

House Bill 96 passed unanimously in 2002, earmarking the $65,000 used to retain ECI/Hyer Architecture to create an initial report which determined renovation costs and recommended possible sustainable uses.

Since then, the non-profit Friends of Jesse Lee Home was created to manage the project on behalf of the State of Alaska and the City of Seward.

The State of Alaska and other donors have designated over $8 million towards the rehabilitation of the property as a statewide leadership charter school - the Balto School.

The final design is scheduled to be finished by July 2013, with construction documents due a month later.

The Board remains optimistic that target funding will be obtained in this legislative session, allowing construction to be completed by Fall 2014, just in time for school to open in August.

Making Curriculum Culturally Relevant

The Balto School's curriculum will be entrusted with energizing rural and urban students, ultimately rallying them to take action on behalf of their communities and the state.

The uniquely "Alaskan" curriculum focuses on delivering the critical thinking and inquiry skills students need to succeed in today's demanding job market while also engaging them with economic, historical, ecological, and community issues that are directly relevant to their lives.

Our science curriculum model follows the example set by celebrated educators such as Sidney Stephens and Alan Dick, as well as teachers at Native Science and Culture camps – setting the bar high for academic achievement while exploring unconventional ways of seeing and investigating natural phenomena.

While much of the science curriculum hinges on the importance of natural resource management and a working knowledge of physical, chemical and biological processes, it also aims to balance the Western method of scientific inquiry with Alaska Native science.

In this manner students develop an ability to approach problems from different perspectives while learning to value the invaluable cultures and expertise of Alaska's Indigenous peoples.

The creation of the science curriculum has been a daunting task, but one that is vitally necessary to the mission and purpose of the school, which is to, "honor our past and shape Alaska's future by empowering students to strengthen Alaskan communities."

By contextualizing student experiences around contemporary issues and technologies, we have endeavored to create lessons that empower pupils to think critically about their generation's most pressing problems.

In order to craft science instruction around current events affecting Alaskans and Alaskan cultures, a great deal of time was dedicated to research and collaboration.

We are deliberately piecing together a curriculum that not only follows Alaskan science and cultural standards, but also integrates some of the most innovative and creative educational materials available to the public.

We've used materials published by a plethora of sources, including: independent educational nonprofits; state energy, forestry, and fish and game departments; the Alaska Native Knowledge Network; UAA and UAF; and local resources available in the Seward community.

The resulting semester-long curriculum is divided into several thematic units, each culminating in one or several student inquiry projects.

To cite an example, a recently developed lesson will be part of a "Water-Hydrosphere" unit.

This particular course of study will focus on how marine resources are managed across various user groups in Alaska.

Students will first analyze how federal, state, private and Native peoples' stakes in marine resource use are distinct as compared to the lower 48.

Subsequently students will explore how public, private, and governmental interests affect fishery management decisions.

In keeping with the school's aspiration to empower students as future decision-makers of Alaska, the unit will culminate with a community-based project that will allow students to learn directly from local hatchery technicians, Fish and Wildlife scientists, and USDA Forest Service technicians.

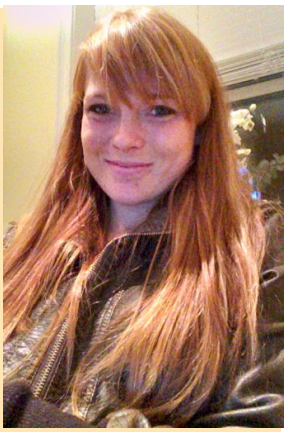
In addition, students will engage in resource use simulations in which they apply concepts of fish escapement, harvest limits, and fishery management goals.

By the end of this particular lesson, groups are required to describe the interaction of state law and fisheries management.

We intend to tap into the fishing industry and expose our students to the jobs available in Alaska's largest manufacturing sector, so they leave with the understanding that there is more to commercial fishing than boats and nets.

Disciplines such as logistics, marketing, graphic design, sales, and public relations all play a part in getting Alaska's fish to the consumer's table.

While serving as a mere glimpse into the nascent academic model of the Balto School, we hope this example sheds light on the level of student rigor and community collaboration that we aspire to sustain in the coming years.



Alanna is a 2009 graduate of Dartmouth College, where she majored in Biology and Native American Studies.

She served in the 2010 Teach For America NM Corps and was privileged enough to teach MS/HS science for the nation of Zuni Pueblo from 2010-2012.

Alanna is currently pursing her studies in culturally relevant education for Native populations at the University of New Mexico, where she plans to earn her M.Ed in June 2013.

Alanna also attends the Institute of American Indian Arts, where she is exploring painting and drawing as a means to enhance discussion around issues affecting Native youth in schools.

STEAM-ING AHEAD

Last July, the first STEAM (Science Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) Institute in Alaska was produced through a collaboration of UAF/School of Natural Sciences and Agricultural Sciences, Boreal House Art & Science Center and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Over one dynamic week, students worked with professional botanists and artists to explore the flora of local boreal forests.

The final project was the creation of a collaborative, illustrated botanical book featuring historical herbs, which was printed and hand bound for all participants.

Students learned to collect, press, identify and document plant specimens while they became familiar with the basics of botanical identification and illustration.

This STEAM exercise produced an innovative and memorable learning experience, demonstrating the benefits of science working hand-in-hand with art, communication, design and technology to teach practical job skills. It is a great example of the type of lessons that will be taught at the Balto School.

At a January meeting with members of the Alaska Miners Association, industry executives agreed that the one skill their new hires were lacking was the ability to communicate technical information in an effective, understandable manner.

It underscores the need for Alaskan leaders need to understand complicated issues, develop strategic analysis, and communicate effectively through a variety of mediums.

Best practices of how to teach these skills can be found in a Kyobo grant-funded course, The Art of Communicating Science, recently offered at the Rhode Island School of Design.

The class was created to enable art students to communicate important global issues to a general audience that is largely science illiterate.

"Most of the science outreach that is designed to improve science literacy among the general public is largely science education," explains co-professor biologist/veterinarian Lucy Spelman.

"But it could be so much more. Artists and designers can have a huge impact by participating in how we communicate science because they have the skills to reach out to people in other ways - to make science fun, debatable, interesting and emotional."

STEAM bridges the gab between business and educational goals to create a more productive and sustainable global culture based on teamwork.

STEAM focuses on the values of innovation, creativity and collaboration by combining art and design to teach students flexible thinking, risk-taking and creative problem solving. These skills are necessary to resolve today's most complex and pressing challenges.

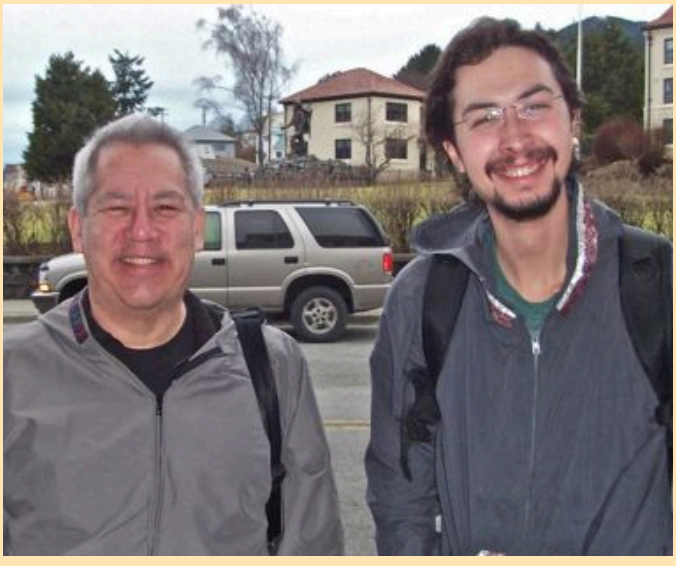
With STEAM curriculum, true innovation is fostered. Innovations come from combining the mind of a scientist or technologist with that of an artist or designer. Leonardo da Vinci is a great example of person with the diverse skills STEAM aims to develop.

Whether focusing on resource management, exploring the effects and implications of ANCSA, or energy, the Balto School will prepare our students to create novel solutions to the singular challenges and opportunities that our state faces.

Students will practice drawing from interdisciplinary knowledge to respond to a challenge ferociously and creatively.

That intellectual nimbleness will drive our state's future economic and technological progress.

"We need to help people feel empowered to change the world, and that doesn't mean just reading a textbook." explains Spelman. "It means having a more science-literate society."



Balto Film Fest Hits Bullseye

Actress Morgan Mitchell, Filmmaker Jonathan Lang, and Actor Marc Hess show off the Grand Prize for the Balto Film Fest

The five submissions to the Balto 48 Hour Challenge illustrate the success of our inaugural film fest.

When visiting Fairbanks, the Academic Advisory Committee members heard the frustration of educators who saw that high school students were being taught the basics of film making - but were asking to what end? There were no industry ties, budding film makers were isolated with no mentoring, and no audience.

Karla Truby brought her two children Sam and Meredith Gleason to Seward after discovering the Balto Film Fest on Facebook. The family had some experience working in theater, but none in film.

They attended the free Friday night workshop where Alaska Screen Actor's Guild representative Ron Holdstrom and Award Winning Director Daniel Hernandez gave them authentic, meaningful, hands-on instruction that was tailored to them individually.

They collaborated with producer Jonathan Lang and cinematographers Kyle Murphy, Kyle Stalder and John McClay, and with a little mentoring produced a film for the competition.

The result was of such quality that the judges expressed a desire to award an Honorable Mention prize for their charming family-friendly short, **While Mom was Away**.

Anchorage director Kyle Murphy had just wrapped on his tenth film, official Anchorage International Film Festival Snowdance Entry **Greenscreen**, and decided to take a working vacation to celebrate.

Murphy gathered his Some Ep'Laceak production crew and headed to Seward to play at the film fest - and engage the local fans of his signature film genre, horror.

"Awesome networking and marketing. Jaw hurting laughter, a great host, and almost no sleep. Yeah, it was an epic time." Murphy suggested.

"I found a local with lungs enough to belt out a scream so awesome that I will be using recordings I got of her letting it loose in that said deadlined productions climactic vengeance scene.

The whole weekend was more than awesome! As soon as I hear a confirmed date for next year I'm writing in time off from work a day before and after."

Murphy's film, **Screamfest Seward**, was filmed at the Yukon Bar and featured Homer singer/songwriter Milo Matthews as well as over a hundred extras.

"Shock cinema invades Balto!" declared Murphy. "Damn we had fun. Dozens of locals used as extras, four cast in roles, one splattered, almost three gallons of blood, a horror scream queen competition, Guerrilla tactics film making whenever we saw opportunity. The whole weekend was more than awesome!"

Palmer's Logan Dellinger is a 21 year old filmmaker who graduated last year from the New York Film Academy, then returned to Alaska to launch Eagle Vision Films.

Dellinger said he came to the Balto Film Fest to network with others in the Alaska Film Industry and enter his first 48 Hour Challenge.

After the first day's shooting technical difficulties caused his team to loose all of their footage, and Dellinger's trouble didn't stop there.

The technology of their finished product didn't interface well with the technology of the projector so their screening was plagued with audio problems.

Fellow Challenge filmmakers were quick to pitch in with assistance - offering up their cameras and technical assistance to the Eagle Vision team.

The result was **Mixed Messages**, a film which came in second place by one vote on the Audience award and after twenty minutes of discussion on the Judge's award.

"Ya know, we had been wondering that...trying to figure out why we had so many road blocks that weekend." Dellinger answered when asked about the challenges. "It became inspiration to the theme of our short, 'sometimes bad things just happen.'

At times we weren't sure which was harder, the Film Festival itself, or trying to get past all the obstacles that kept us from even being a contender in it.

In the end we proved a lot to ourselves, that we 'could' do it, no matter what happens.

I think that's a very important learning experience, and in some weird way I'm glad it happened to us.

Because now we're hungry. We know we're contenders. And film is our life. We can't wait until the next festival!"

Love & Hate, a touristy piece submitted in the Challenge, was made in less than 24 hours.

Director Jonathon Lang had finished his winning entry, and collaborated with two other film production companies, Ultimate Asian Man and There's Boobs Everywhere to create a fun flirty entry that highlighted all the great reasons to live in Seward.

Representative Charisse Millett - R, Senator Lesil McGuire - R, and Representative Chris Tuck - D - who sponsored the recently passed Alaska Film Tax Credit bill, made up the Blue Ribbon judging panel for the Balto 48 Hour Challenge.

Starting at noon on Sunday, over 80 people came to the UAF Rae Auditorium Building to screen Alaskan-made films and discover the winner of the Balto 48 Hour Film Challenge.

Top honors were awarded to **Resurrection Bay**, which used locations from Seward Ships to Lowell Point, and starred Kodiak's Morgan Mitchell and Marc Hess of Anchorage.

The Bearded Jon Lang of Pay No Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain film featured exceptional special effects make up and a classic Alaskan tale.

Lang is the son of Sue Lang, who owns the B&B A Cottage by the Bay on Lowell Point.

Lang used some of the $500 he collected as the winner of both the Audience Choice and the Judge's prize to have the Rachmaninoff Vocalize used in the movie's score recorded locally. Lang intends to submit the finished film in competitive film festivals.

Lang was also awarded a framed Balto Film Fest poster which featured Steve Blankenship's Alaska State Fair second place award-winning "Dangerous Catch" mermaid photograph, a Cook Inlet-style moon and stars mask trophy created by internationally renown Alaskan carver Michael Scott of Sterling, and a gift basket filled to the brim with Seward produced items.

The 2012 Balto 48 Hour Challenge films can be viewed at www.baltofilmfest.net. The Balto Film Fest is scheduled for July 26-28, 2013.

GOING GREEN

Savvy environmentalists will tell you that the greenest building is the one already built.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently released a groundbreaking study which provides the most comprehensive analysis to date of the potential environmental benefit of building reuse.

This study, The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse, concludes that, when comparing buildings of equivalent size and function, building reuse almost always offers environmental savings over demolition and new construction.

Historic preservation should be an important component of any effort to promote sustainable development.

Historic rehabilitation has a thirty-two year track record of creating 2 million jobs and generating $90 billion in private investment.

Since developers of historic buildings often buy local and hire local, studies show more than 75 percent of the economic benefits of historic rehabilitation remain in the local economies.

Reusing existing buildings is good for the economy, the community and the environment...but the FJLH isn't resting on rehabilitation. We are committed to being certified under the Living Building Challenge - the built environment's most rigorous performance standard, and incorporating this program into our school curriculum.

Learn more about this series of ambitious performance requirements at living-future.org/lbc.

The Balto School Academic Advisory Committee members: Laura Hensley, Daniel Becker, Paul Ongtooguk, Kirsten Vesel, Dorene Lorenz and Dewey Hoffman.

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