

The Nome Static

KNOM Radio Mission
PO Box 988
Nome, AK 99762
(907) 443-5221

Transmission 612: Christmas 2015

visit us at knom.org



dear friend of knom,

In Western Alaska, it is a time of waiting: waiting for lengthier periods of daylight; waiting for the changes that a New Year will bring; and waiting, of course, for the arrival of Christmas Day. Greetings from Nome, where Advent is truly a special time of year.

With the sunlight of each day now hovering around only three or four hours, the weeks prior to Christmas may be dark, literally, but they are very bright in spirit. It's a lively time of year at KNOM, on our airwaves and within our studio halls. Thanks to you, we're doing all we can, as we always do, to make merry as Christmas nears.

As you'll read this month, there's celebration in the air, even prior to the festivities of Christmas. Page 3 describes how we celebrated the contributions of rural Alaska's veterans last month; on pages 3-4, you'll read about awards that KNOM recently received — and, more importantly, the rural-Alaska-driven broadcasting work that inspired those awards. And page 2 details a KNOM tenure certainly worth celebrating; don't miss our farewell to an outgoing staffer.

While we wait for Christmas, we're keeping busy, of course: not only keeping KNOM on the air — and keeping our region informed, engaged, and inspired — but also keeping you in our prayers, too. From all of us, best wishes for a Merry Christmas. As we hope you'll agree, it is a lustrous and wonderful time of year in Western Alaska — and a merry time to be waiting.

"when they saw the star..."

Passersby near KNOM studios have an extra reason to think of Christmas these days. High atop our FM transmitter tower, our Christmas star

is lit, brightly punctuating the Nome skyline.

As *Static* readers may know, our Christmas star — which we illuminate at the onset of every Advent and keep lit throughout the Christmas season — is one of our oldest holiday traditions, and given the open landscape of our region, it's visible for miles, a symbolic beacon seen by local residents, travelers, and even airplane passengers.

Of course, it's hardly our only way of marking the season. Our volunteer producers work on the latest installment of our annual Christmas radio drama, and all on staff help with our annual *Christmas Call-In Show*, during which listeners can personally say a Christmas greeting to far-flung friends or family. Our music and radio spots are Christmas-themed, too, and on Christmas Day, we broadcast live Mass from our local parish, St. Joseph Catholic Church in Nome, with special thoughts and prayers going to the many listeners in rural, Western Alaskan communities that have no local priest. Our studios — and St. Joseph church — are bedecked with many of the same types of decorations that may adorn your homes, although in the case of St. Joe's, there's a loving nod to rural Alaska: in the manger scene (pictured above), Mary, Joseph, and the Christ child are all wearing Alaska-Native-style parkas.

In ways simple or subtle, we're doing what we can to make this season bright for our region. Thanks for making it possible. *Merry Christmas!*

"I like winter in Alaska because I get to see the stars. If the bottom of heaven is that beautiful, imagine how wonderful the top will be!"



matthew, off to new horizons

We hope you'll join us in wishing a fond farewell to a KNOM staffer who's just departed our mission. After years of service to Western Alaska, news director **Matthew Smith** has moved on from his position at KNOM, as of mid-November.

While we're sad to lose Matt's regular presence at KNOM — as both a friend and a colleague — we're blessed from the years of service he gave to Alaska.

Hailing from Wilmington, Delaware, Matt first came to KNOM in 2010 to serve as volunteer public affairs director. For two years, he contributed with aplomb to KNOM news, producing episodes of our long-form news series *Profiles* and *Elder Voices*. As a reporter, he brought countless local and state-wide stories to our rural Alaska listeners — such as the unprecedented wintertime fuel delivery to Nome undertaken by the Russian fuel tanker *Renda*; Matt (as pictured) was one of the only American reporters allowed on board the vessel.

Although Matt departed KNOM in 2012, he kept both Alaska and news reporting in his life; in Anchorage, he cut his teeth in television broadcasting with stations KTVA and KTUU. In spring 2014, Matt brought his news chops right back to our mission as our news director.

Over the past 18 months, Matt's built on the deep traditions of more than four decades of KNOM news. He's led new initiatives to engage our region — such as through individual news stories published to our website, **knom.org**, and through a reinvigorated, regionally topical call-in show, *Exchange*, that brings together the concerns, questions, and opinions of Western Alaska listeners with local experts and community voices. He's also continued his work as an outstanding reporter, such as during his time on this year's Iditarod trail — an experience that, as you'll read at right, produced award-winning journalism.

Matthew has been an essential part of our mission for the years we've been blessed to have him at KNOM, and we — and our communities — will surely miss his presence in Nome and on the radio. (We'll be thinking about Matthew, too, as he moves to southern Florida — a big change from northern Alaska! — to be close to his fiancée.) We thank you so much for making his tenure at KNOM possible; as we hope you'll agree, it's been greatly impactful.

(Photos: Matthew reporting on the Nome voyage of the *Renda*, at the beginning of the 2015 Iditarod trail, and in KNOM's newsroom in Nome.)



Hard times are the grit that heaven uses to polish its jewels.

all-in for veterans day

As it is every year, this November was a time for giving thanks — and not just with turkeys and gravy and stuffing. Last month, KNOM paid grateful tribute to the veterans of our communities and our state through coverage of Nome's Veterans Day parade.

Our tribute involved nearly all of KNOM's on-air staff; amid frigid cold and icy streets, volunteers **Emily Russell**, **Maddie Winchester**, **Mitch Borden**, and **Laura Kraegel** joined forces with news director **Matthew Smith** to provide live parade commentary. As it has been in so many other years, Nome's Veterans Day parade — and, we hope, our live coverage of it — was a simple way of saying "thank you" to the women and men, especially those in rural Alaska, who have spent time in the armed forces.

As you might expect, there's a long history of veterans who hail from KNOM's listening area; in fact, of all fifty states, Alaska has the highest proportion of citizens who are also veterans (16.2%). This heritage includes the World-War-II-era **Alaska Territorial Guard**, a specialized delegation of Alaskan servicemen, ranging in age from young teenagers to senior citizens, who volunteered to serve the US more than a decade before Alaska was even a state. For more on the ATG, we encourage you to read "Called to Serve" from our Christmas 2010 *Static*, available on knom.org; as we detailed in our newsletter, five years ago, then-news-volunteer **Ben Matheson** helped capture — and bring to our listeners — the local history of the ATG; he's pictured interviewing ATG vet **Franklin Okitkun**. For more, visit us on the web!

2015 nods from the ABA

We're both energized and grateful to announce that KNOM Radio Mission took home five awards — four for excellence in broadcasting and one for the dedication of our general manager — at the November 2015 convention of the Alaska Broadcasters Association in Anchorage. Thanks to you, the work that our volunteers and staff produce is making waves not only within rural Alaska but throughout our state.

This year, ABA's broadcasting awards — their "Goldies" — shined the spotlight on KNOM's news and public affairs programming, in particular. KNOM AM-FM received four Goldie wins: one for an entire program, *KNOM Update News*, our flagship news series — which won for **Best Radio Newscast** — and the other three for specific stories or broadcasts. Each of



Lord, be born in my heart. Come alive in me this Christmas.

I want to be reborn through you to a better world.



*We give our love in boxes:
wrapped, tied, and tagged. But
the first Christmas gift was a
Love that needed no adornment
or disguise, a love that wrapped
Itself around our hearts forever.*



CONTINUED FROM "2015 NODS..." PAGE 3

these three, we believe, are examples of the incredible service your support makes possible.

Our in-house Alaska storytelling series, *Story49*, took home a Goldie in the **Best Community Service** category for an episode focusing on racial equity and understanding. The program involved a heartfelt, in-depth conversation on sometimes-difficult topics, and it was a collaboration between KNOM's news and programming department — 2014-2015 volunteers **Jenn Ruckel** and **Kristin Leffler**, in particular — with members of the Nome community.

KNOM's outgoing news director, **Matthew Smith**, received two nods at the ABA show for specific stories in early 2015. One of Matt's "package stories" from the thick of this year's Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race — a story entitled "Mushers Traverse The Mighty Yukon in Race to Ruby" — took home a Goldie for **Best Sportscast**. His story on this winter's halted helicopter transportation to the tiny, remote community of Diomedede, Alaska — "Three Weeks, No Flights: Diomedede Residents Stranded without Mail, Food Deliveries" — won a Goldie for **Best Uniquely Alaskan Program**. Some of our newsletter readers may recognize this incredible story of Diomedede — one of the most remote places in the world, a community perched along an island cliff in the Bering Strait, overlooking the International Date Line and the eastern border of Russia — from our March and April 2015 issues of the *Static*. (Diomedede, and a scene from this year's Iditarod, are pictured at left.)

Finally, general manager **Ric Schmidt**, as pictured, received ABA's **President's Award**, which is "in recognition of and appreciation for outstanding contributions to the Alaska Broadcasters Association." (Thanks to ABA's **Cathy Hiebert** for the photo!)

We're so grateful to you for making possible the work that prompted these awards, and as always, we share them with you and with all of our supporters, listeners, and community members. To learn more about the programs that took home Goldies this year — and to listen to them! — visit us on the web at knom.org. Thank you so much, and *congratulations!*

take knom with you

Want to read this newsletter on your computer, smartphone, tablet, or other internet-capable mobile device? Simply visit this address in your web browser: knom.org/static/612.

Please consider KNOM in your estate planning.