Readers can help unravel three of the enduring mysteries of life in Fairbanks

By Dermot Cole

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From the electronic mailbag: “I was wondering if I could ask you a couple of questions since I’m a relative newby at seven years in Fairbanks and have a good ways to go to earn my stripes as a rusticator in residence.”

I’m not sure what that means, but it sounds impressive. In any case, I was stumped. I couldn’t answer the questions, but I’m sure there are those in the reading public who can.

Here’s a clever three-part challenge:

1. On the way out Chena Hot Springs Road not far from the turn off from the Steese, there is a roofless, incomplete log cabin on the left with a “For Sale” sign in front. The logs themselves are of hefty girth. It’s been for sale since we moved here. Is there a story on that?

2. Inside the unique hamlet of North Pole is (was) a modest log cabin with some perennial Christmas decorations on the front. It’s across the street from Pizza Hut and
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Next to one of the concrete mulberry bushes (roundabouts). It looks vintage and set up for habitation at one time but I’ve seldom seen anyone around it. It is now being torn down. It did add some rustic flavor to the town. Story on that?

3. Some older homes in the area have what looks like thick foam roofs that acquire a whitish layer on the surface almost like aged cheese. They appear to offer good insulation but it’s a method that seems to have fallen out of favor. Did this stuff have a name and did it work well?

These are great questions. That unfinished log structure deserves a spot in the “Guinness World Records” for years on the market, but I’d like to know more about it. I also am in need of enlightenment on the North Pole cabin and the foam roofs.

If you can unravel one or more of these mysteries, write to cole@newsminer.com or call me at 459-7530.

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SIGNING OFF: In a similar questioning vein, Emily Benner writes:

“My aunt used to live in Fairbanks in 1959 and 1960. She remembers watching local TV, and each evening the station would sign off with the Alaska flag song and a poem. She doesn’t remember what the poem is and would like to know.”

Anyone know the poem?

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UAF ALUMNI: Former Borough Mayor Jim Sampson leads the list of UAF alumni to be
recognized Sept. 26 at the annual awards luncheon.

Other UAF alumni to receive awards include: Lorena Hegdal, Patrick Cole, Kay Wallis, Mike Sfraga, Merritt Mitchell, Marie Matsuno Nash, Rich Tarkiainen, Donald Jamieson and Scott Keyes.

The luncheon is at the Princess Hotel. Tickets are $25, and reservations should be made by Sept. 22. Call 474-7081 or go to www.uaf.edu/alumni.

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IMPRESSIONISM: “Saturday Night Live” has had Dan Aykroyd as Carter and Richard Nixon, Chevy Chase as Gerald Ford, Dana Carvey as Ross Perot and George H. W. Bush and Darrell Hammond as Bill Clinton.

But Tina Fey’s portrayal of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin on Saturday night may have topped them all. She could be Palin’s stunt double on the campaign trail.

Also noteworthy on the weekend show was the appearance of the “Alaska Pete” character who may have been the first to utter the words “Chitina” and “dip netting” on a national comedy show.

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SCIENCE CONFERENCE: More than 150 scientists are expected at the Arctic Science Conference, which opens this morning at the Westmark and continues through Wednesday.
Opening remarks will be offered by Brian Rogers, Dan Julius, Buck Sharpton, Carl Benson and Craig Gerlach.

Much of the conference will deal with observing, understanding and responding to changing conditions in the Arctic.

The public is welcome to attend the 15th Arctic Roundtable, which takes place today from 7-9:30 p.m. in the Gold Room, moderated by Carl Benson.

Terry Whitledge, Deborah Williams and Gary Kofinas will lead a discussion on “Coping with Change.”

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TIRED: Speaking of change, studded snow tires are acceptable as of today. No snow is in the local forecast just yet, but with low temperatures expected in the 30s in coming days, it might not be long.

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DOWN TO BUSINESS: The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce Fall Conference and Trade Show is set for Tuesday through Thursday at the Carlson Center. The theme is “49th State, 49th Year: Planning for Alaska’s Prosperity.”

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ROAD WORK: The short stretch of the Old Steese between Home Depot and Wal-Mart to the Johansen Expressway will be closed from today at 7 a.m. through Wednesday
at 7 a.m. for work on the traffic lights.

FALL SESSION: UAF interim Chancellor Brian Rogers will offer his views Tuesday at 1 p.m. on the coming academic year and plans to implement recommendations from transition teams that met through the summer to study ways to improve UAF. The occasion is the fall convocation, which is set for the Davis Concert Hall. An ice cream social will follow.