



Adventures in Juneau—You cannot know how Alaska’s Capital works without going there.

Description

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Donn Liston confronts Senator Rodey

Few Alaskans bother to visit our state capital city where elected officials pass laws and conduct state business. There is good reason for this.

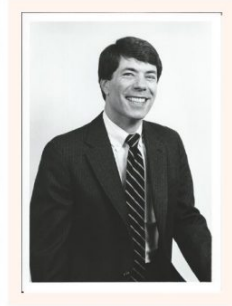
Being a product of Southcentral Alaska myself, as a young man I wondered about what Juneau was like, and on two previous occasions I had traveled to Juneau by plane and ferried a senator's car, before my first drive there alone—777 miles through White Pass from **Costco Gas** to Haines. At Haines, I took the ferry ride to the Juneau/Auke Bay **Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS)** terminal.



Audi Fox

I first drove to Juneau when then-Sen. **Pat Rodey**, Democrat, offered to pay the cost of gas for me to drive his Audi Fox automobile there for him. A friend and I made that winter run. The second time was when one of my public relations business accounts, **3M Company**, sent me there to cover its attempt to fix the leaky roof of the **Capitol Building**—which was continuously flooding offices of Lt. Gov. **Terry Miller** no matter what **Alaska Legislative Affairs Agency** did to fix it. Both were adventures, and I learned from each, before later going there to work as a Legislative Aide during the **13th Legislative Session**, for the Representative from the midtown Anchorage district where I lived during high school.

PATRICK RODEY

**LEGISLATIVE SERVICE:**

1975-1992 Senator District

BIRTH DATE/PLACE:

01/22/1943;

San Francisco, California

OCCUPATION:

Attorney

EDUCATION:

High School: West Anchorage, 1961

College/University: University of Alaska, B.A. (Education), 1966

Post Graduate: Chico State University, M.A. (Social Science), 1974;

University of Arizona, J.D. (Law), 1973

EMPLOYMENT:

Chairman and Member, Code Revision Commission;

Member, Permanent Fund Committee;

Research Professor, University of Alaska;

Attorney, Corps of Engineers;

Administrative Assistant, Lieutenant Governor H. A. Boucher;

Administrative Assistant, House Speaker Jalmar Kerttula;

Labor Foreman, Peter Kiewit Sons Construction Company;

Assistant Produce Manager, Safeway Corporation

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:

Member, Alaska Retarded Children's Association;

Member, American Bar Association;

Phi Alpha Delta

SPECIAL INTERESTS:

Fishing, hunting, skiing,

tennis, soccer

We made pretty good time with the senator's car until getting to a place, now long closed, called **Dezadeash**. There we met a metal "Road Closed" bar across the highway. We paid to stay at the lodge with the money we needed to fly home. One staffer for Sen. Rodey was a personal friend, but when I tried to talk to the senator directly, he kept ducking me. That got old fast. When I finally confronted Sen. Rodey in a window seat of the capitol, he decided to immediately pay the \$100 we needed to get home. My friend who had driven down with me took a photo of that confrontation.

The second time I went to Juneau prior to 1983 was by airplane, courtesy of the 3M company.

The capitol building, which had originally been completed in 1931, and served back then as Territorial Capitol housing the Legislature, Governor, the post office, Courts, and numerous other federal and territorial agencies. Today our Capitol contains the offices of the State Legislature, Governor, and Lieutenant Governor.



The roof of the capitol is a slab of poured concrete. Over the years it has cracked. No amount of tar and feathers (left over from running off politicians wanting to move the capital) could stop the leaks. As the inventor of the **Sticky Note**, 3M had also developed a means for dealing with roof leaks on large buildings—using a coating on the concrete, covering the area with a “membrane,” and putting another coating over that. I dutifully went to Juneau, interviewed the 3M rep and local contractor, took pictures, and wrote a glowing press release about the accomplishment.

No media in Alaska ran the story, but it was a big hit in Outside media outlets. Apparently, a lot of Alaskans who had only a few years earlier voted to move the capitol to Southcentral Alaska, didn't care if their politicians were drowned in Juneau.

[1] Alaska's Capital Move Efforts: O Ye, of little Faith, DONN LISTON
<https://donnliston.net/2019/01/alaskas-capital-move-efforts-o-ye-of/>

Then I was offered a job as a legislative aide by Rep. **John Lindauer**. I sold my business of six years and took the job. Lindauer found it novel that I had purchased a 24-ft sailboat on a trailer and planned to drive it down to live on it.

For that winter run to Haines I had purchased a raunchy 1977 Ford flatbed truck from a friend who was an attorney. The fellow who owned it previously had spent a lot of money lifting the truck up from the axles, putting a big carburetor on it, and an intake snout that made it look like some kind of mobile air cleaner. When I stepped on the accelerator, it sounded like a toilet flushing as gasoline gushed in and the big wheels all spun in 4-wheel drive.

The guy who had owned this beast before his lawyer got it was a hot-head. He had been racing around Anchorage, and somebody had slid into the door and dented it. According to my attorney

friend, this guy who loved this truck, got out and pistol-whipped the other driver! His karma was to give up the truck he loved as partial payment for an attorney to represent him in court for assault.



This truck delivered my boat and myself to Juneau.

I drove the entire way with only a couple of short naps with engine and heater running. It became very cold after Tok.

When I finally did get to Haines, I had to back the boat onto the ferry. This was an almost impossible task given my exhaustion. One of the men from the crew walked the ramp next to my open window telling me to turn the wheel, "left, left, right, straight" until it was finally loaded. I was so wiped out I went up to the solarium at the back of the ship, pulled out my sleeping bag, and collapsed on a lounge chair. The ferry trip from Haines to Juneau can take anywhere from 4-6 hours, according to the weather, but it seemed like I had only gone to sleep when I heard the loudspeaker blasting: *"The person with the truck and the sailboat needs to come to the car deck immediately or we will be calling the tow truck!"*

I was holding up the unloading of the entire car deck.

I jumped out of my sleeping bag, put on my shoes, and ran down the stairways. I had made it to Juneau with my boat, and my life was about to change. That boat would also change, from a shell day-sailor to a cozy magic carpet ride around Southeast Alaska.

This also made it possible to live in the most expensive community in Alaska, with the highest per-capita average income in the state.



My Juneau home for five years.

Fast forward to January, 2018: The 30th Legislature convened in Juneau beginning January 10 and I'm here again—some 25 years later. Ready for my next adventure.

References:



Alaska's Capital Move Efforts, O Ye of Little Faith, DONN LISTON January 27, 2019
<https://donnliston.net/2019/01/alaskas-capital-move-efforts-o-ye-of/>

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