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Susan Mumma, an artist at heart

by *Charity Winters*



Susan Mumma

Susan Mumma is one who has dedicated her life to the arts in many ways. Not only does she pursue them in her own time through the guitar and watercolor paintings, she once taught art and music at Susan B. English and now works to provide musical entertainment through the [Seldovia Arts Council](#).

Susan first came to Alaska on a trip with her family in the 1970's. She liked it so much that she pursued a teaching job in Kenai and landed a permanent substitute position for one year. She then moved on to Cooper Landing for 3 years. An environmental education trip took her down to Seldovia. Susan decided it was the place for her! The following year she got a job at SBE and taught "everything from soup to nuts" except for math. She recalls her teaching days with a lot of fondness. With her double masters degree in art and

Another large part of Susan's life for the past 30 years has been the [Seldovia Rowing Club](#). Originally a duplex home set right on the old boardwalk, Susan bought the building in 1978. She admits with a chuckle that it was sort of "an unusual thing for a 23-year-old single woman to do". Her initial thoughts were to turn the building into a deli or a coffeehouse, providing live musical entertainment. But in 1980, the Seldovia Rowing Club opened up as the very first bed and breakfast in South Central Alaska. She had a neat story for me when I asked about its rather unusual name. Growing up in the San Diego area, Susan and her parents used to visit a famous rowing club on San Diego Bay called the San Diego Rowing Club. The building was similar to Susan's bed and breakfast – set up on stilts right over the water. Susan had often told her parents that she wanted to own a building just like it one day. When she opened the Seldovia Rowing Club, her parents sent her a miniature

education from the University of Oregon, Susan enjoys working with the creatively gifted and talented. Kindergarten was her favorite grade to teach just because “you can do it all!”

Now retired from teaching since 1996, Susan spends most of her time and energy as the chairperson for the Seldovia Arts Council. Her initial goal when it began in 1980 was to provide a way for people of all ages to be able to enjoy the musical culture of their community and it’s members. Susan would like to see more of a move to encouraging local artists to exhibit their talent, but in the meantime, the Council has done a lot to bring musicians and artists from all over the world to our little spot on the globe. Since 1999, the Seldovia Arts Council has worked on over 75 different projects ranging from concerts to workshops for both the community and the school. Their biggest event is the Summer Solstice Festival, which has been held annually for the past 5 years. This year the festival will be on June 16th and 17th and feature the artists David Francey and Al Simmons along with several other acts. Susan is also hoping for more involvement from the local community talents.

version of the rowing club, reminding her of her vision years ago.

For a time, Susan displayed her work in the upstairs of her bed and breakfast, calling it the Stairway Gallery. The gallery now serves as the Seldovia Arts Council office, although Susan’s beautiful paintings still cover the walls. Susan also uses the Rowing Club to house her Crazy Crow productions in the summer. Twice a month she invites musicians to play in the downstairs living area and the audience crowds into the cozy little room to enjoy a small concert.

When she’s not busy with the Seldovia Arts Council or traveling the world to visit workshops, Susan spends a lot of quiet time painting or playing her guitar. Her goal is to eventually become a singer/songwriter with some genuine guitar skills. “The synergy of music is so uplifting!” she claims, “And it is so fulfilling to play [music] with others.” Susan admits that her real natural talent is her watercolor painting. “It gives me a lot of joy... it’s the way I see things.”

[Susan's Trip to Washington, DC 2002](#)



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