

The (Wild)cat in the Hat

Tuesday, May 1, 2018



It's not exactly Michael Jackson's white glove, but at UNH, the red hat worn by professor Nancy Kinner — a rock star in her own right — has become iconic.



There aren't any sequins, but there is a feather. And a red satin ribbon. Kinner has been wearing the hat (if not the same exact one, a variation) for the last 30 years. It has gotten so she doesn't feel like herself, or look like herself, without it.

It all started with a colleague who loved to shop. The pair met in England while Kinner was doing a fellowship. They later applied for a grant together that brought him to the United States, where they conducted wastewater treatment studies along the East Coast.

"Every time we went on a trip, he shopped," says Kinner. One excursion here in New Hampshire took them into a little store on Route 4. A red hat was hanging on the wall. "He saw it and said, 'Oh, Nancy, you have to get that, it's you.' I've worn it ever since."

Or one very much like it. Kinner has accumulated a collection that includes a couple of baseball hats, a knit beanie, a few variations

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of the felt fedora, and the red tasseled tam that she wears at commencement. She also has a red bike helmet.

On a few rare occasions, Kinner has been somewhere off campus bareheaded and run into a student that she doesn't know but who will say, "Oh, I know you — you wear the red hat." It's her signature. Just like those white sequin gloves.

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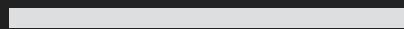
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