

The people behind The Nugget... *Jim Anderson*

Jim Anderson is the oldest of the old hands at *The Nugget Newspaper* — both in years and in tenure.

The columnist has been banging away on the keyboard turning out his “Tales From A Sisters Naturalist” column for *The Nugget* for at least 30 years. He and editor Jim Cornelius calculate the output at well over 1,000 columns.

Then-editor and publisher Erik Dolson approached Anderson about producing a column.

“He said, ‘Why don’t you write about your favorite subject: Nature,’” Anderson recalled. “And I did, and he liked it. And that started me at *The Nugget*.”

Anderson’s interest in writing was sparked much, much earlier though — growing up in New England.

“I started writing because of my old drunken uncle,” he said, sounding just like the beginning of a “Jim Anderson Story.” His uncle was Moulton Alexander Rockefeller, and it all started because of bees.

“He asked me to help him get a swarm of bees,” Anderson recalled.

The young Jim found this a terrifying prospect. He truly thought that he was facing his death. Uncle Moulton assured him that the bees were “gentle girls,” and sent young Jim up

a tree after them.

“After that bee job we did together, he became a pal,” Jim said. “Because he had books. He got me into books.”

Uncle Moulton may have been a drunk, as Jim recalled, but he was an intellectual, with a journalism degree from Columbia University. He gave Jim books to read, and he broke down what made a book good, down to what Ernest Hemingway would call “one true sentence.”

“It enriched my life to the point where nothing was ever the same again,” Anderson said.

With a love of nature and a love of good writing, Anderson rolled into Bend on a Harley Davidson motorcycle in 1951 — lured to Oregon, predictably enough, by reading about it.

Here, Phil Brogan, a writer for *The Bulletin* and *The Oregonian*, took Anderson under his wing.

“Phil Brogan finished it,” Anderson said.

From then on, Anderson would combine his passion for animals and the natural world with his love for a well-turned sentence, building a career as a naturalist with a parallel career as a writer, including working for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and publishing a

book titled “Tales from a Northwest Naturalist.”

Not only is he a fixture on the pages of *The Nugget*, he is also a fixture in Sisters classrooms, often bringing an owl to show Sisters school children a glimpse of the world in the forests surrounding them.

Anderson’s columns have been beloved by generations of *Nugget* readers — and he’s also done some reporting, particularly on natural-resources issues. The difference between being a columnist and a reporter is a longstanding point of (mock) contention between Anderson and his editor.

“The idea that the author should stay out of a news story is kind of lost on him,” Cornelius said. “Takes a bit of editorial heavy lifting to get those news stories in shape...”

Cornelius asked Anderson if, at 90, there was any hope of convincing him to truly embrace the distinction.

“No,” Anderson said. “How many years have you been trying to do that? I know

there’s a difference. But I like to put the folksy stuff in. So that’s the way it’s supposed to be.”

He says that his favorite columns have been about eagles, for whom he has a special passion. He’s been banding them since 1962, when poison and chemicals were devastating populations. He’s seen them come back to become once again a fixture of Sisters Country.

He plans to keep writing as long as he can, and looks back on his voluminous production

with a touch of bemused pride. He still loves the work, and he choked up a bit saying so.

“I like it — because it gives me the opportunity to express myself,” he said. “It gives me the opportunity to honor my old Uncle Moulton.”

It’s been a long lifetime since a scared kid climbed a bee tree at the behest of his old drunken uncle. The twig that was bent back then has grown into a tall and venerable tree.

And, at the risk of editorial intrusion into a feature story — long may it stand.



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Jim Anderson is a naturalist, a columnist and an educator at age 90.

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