



Go simple, go now!

By Tom Peterson



Living a longer, happier, healthier life for Bob Kenyon is, well, kind of simple. The 80-year-old doesn't work out. Or not in the way that we traditionally think of "working out."

He just does not drive a car in The Dalles. That's all.

He lives on Liberty Street. And when he needs groceries? He walks. If he has an appointment in town? That's right – foot drive.

"I usually hike or walk somewhere. Today it was Sorosis Park," he said. It was pouring rain that day. "I can't get through a day without exercise."

But he's not at gyms or public pools. That river is down there, and it beckons," he said. In warmer weather, Bob does a daily swim at Klindt's Cove in the Columbia River at 6:30 a.m. before a breakfast of porridge.

Kenyon is a kind of poster child, err... senior, for Blue Zones which puts forward 9 power principles drawn from societies around the world that have bubbles of population living to be centenarians. These are people reporting longer, happier lives.

Kenyon said he identified with much of these philosophies or behaviors. These centenarians typically walk much, have a purpose when they wake up in the morning, surround themselves with people who support them and eat a diet that is typically no more than 20 percent meat based. This summer Bob completed a 200-mile trip down the Columbia River to the North Jetty at the mouth of the Columbia River. Remember, he is 80.

It's like the trip he did at age 70 and age 60. That's right, a three-peat.

"Go simple, go solo, go now," he said, finding the thread that has led him to this point in his life.

That mantra has led him throughout the world on horseback, by boat and backpack.

Exercise was never his main goal – adventure, meeting and helping people – that's his ticket. Because the joy is in the doing.

"I think that he is a model of a carbon footprint and his general mental health and relationships are primary in his life," said Mike Ballinger, who had the occasion to do a seven-day kayak trip with Bob in September of 2018.

Mike had seen Bob walking in town. He heard of his kayaking. So, he invited him on his own trip.

"I was a little anxious about taking an 80-year-old guy down the river," he said. "When I paddled with him the first time, I could see this guy was so comfortable on the water," he said.

Bob joined Mike and his two brothers, Paul and Allen and friend Peter Gay on a trip below Bonneville Dam to near Astoria.

Mike said he and his brothers considered themselves "gear freaks" and so when they set up camp the first night, there was a stark contrast. "We were unloading chairs and a table and Bob just threw his sleeping bag and a 35-year-old tent that he didn't set up on the beach.

"He went up to his neck in the water and started playing harmonica," Mike said, "while we were stumbling around in camp setting up."

Mike could not remember an instance when Bob used a stove to cook a hot meal the entire trip.

However, old sol did a little cooking for him along the way.

On a hot afternoon, they pulled up on a beach. Bob grabbed a plastic water bottle and added some powdered milk to it. He buried it in the warm sun-bathed sand and went swimming. He came back some 20 minutes later dug it up and added instant coffee to the blend.

"These lattes are four bucks at Starbucks," Mike remembered him quipping. Ballinger was so struck with Kenyon's simple approach; the accomplished guitarist composed a song about Kenyon that aspires to find the flow Kenyon has created in his life. It's titled "Be The River."

"Mike caught the feeling of the river (any river) and especially the lyrics "find the flow, just go," said Kenyon.

That simple flow also runs through Kenyon's food choices. On the day of our interview he said he had some lentils and veggies in a crock pot at home, and he would likely graze on them throughout the day.

And when the farmer's market is operating, that's where he does most of his shopping. He thrives on a mostly vegetable diet with some chicken, he said.

And being flexible and willing to continue to learn are key for a sense of well-being, he pointed out.

Bob recently took up the drum. He joins the drum circle at Gorge Community Music on Saturdays.

He plays several different instruments, in fact, and currently has a goal to commit some 90 songs to memory.

It's those intentional choices that have made all the difference in his life, especially in respect to people. He keeps an eye out for people like Ballinger.

"I believe there are coincidences in our life that direct our path," he said. "And your path in life has a lot to do with who you happen to meet along the way."

Kenyon said a chance meeting with a man from Goldendale on a horseback trip in Idaho led him to the great decision to move from California to the Gorge in the Early 1970s, for example.

While Kenyon is, no doubt, a stand-out when it comes to physical health and well-being, his principles and Blue Zones principles can be applied to any of our lives.

Eating well, walking, finding the things you love and inspire you and surrounding yourself with supportive people can be achieved, one decision at a time. One vegetable, one walk, one chance meeting with someone really cool at a time.

"It's nice to be 80," said Kenyon who is still thoroughly enjoying his life. "I have no objection to it."

For more information, you can find Blue Zones Project The Dalles on Facebook.

Vote for The Dalles

Here's a chance to show your community pride. Blue Zones Project The Dalles is getting behind the push to win a spot on the web series Small Business Revolution.

The Dalles is pitted against four other towns in a contest to see who can garner the most internet votes.

The voting is occurring now through Jan. 21st. If The Dalles gets the most

votes, **the TV series will focus on The Dalles and bring \$500,000 of investment to six local small businesses** and the community. Voters can vote one time per person, per device, per day.

Go to lovetheDalles.com and click on the yellow "Small Biz Revolution" banner and vote. And then tell your friends to vote too.



BLUE ZONES PROJECT®
3591 Klindt Drive, Ste.120, T.D.
541-288-4487

**Eat Healthy.
Be Happy.**

We feature a range of delicious choices to keep you moving

302 W. 2nd St., The Dalles
Tues-Sun 11 - 9 • 541-769-0500

