

VOICES

# Sweet memory of nerd love

By CARLA KELLEY  
Special to The Observer

I remember Camp Pine Valley because it was the site of my first kiss, delivered by a sweet nerdy guy named Frank.

He was 12. I was 11 but working hard to look older.

Frank was a skinny guy who wore thick glasses. His real name was Franklin, but at that time in his life he preferred Frank. We both longed to be reading books instead of choosing up ball game teams, but books were in short supply at Camp Pine Valley. He was not interested in sports, which endeared him to me.

I recall that he held my hand at campfire sing-a-longs. I felt loved. Suddenly I was not all alone anymore. That was special.

After the summer camp session ended, we campers returned to Montreal where most of us lived. Frank and I “dated” a bit after camp, although “dating” is a big word for what we did. We had absolutely no private time together.

A date with Frank meant his father drove him to my house. Then we would all drive to see a movie.

This in itself was exciting: not because Frank was holding my damp hand in his, but because it was illegal for anyone under 16 years of age to attend most movies in the puritanical Quebec Province of 1957. His nice parents would attend the movie with us to bolster the lie about our ages as we bought our tickets.

A few months later, our little romance came to an abrupt end when my father took a new job — in Iowa. In 1958 our nuclear family moved more than 1000

ANYONE CAN WRITE

Nearly 40 years in the business have taught me that readers are bombarded and overwhelmed with facts. What we long for, though, is meaning and a connection at a deeper and more universal level. And that’s why The Observer will be running, from time to time, stories from students who are in my writing class, which I’ve been teaching for the past 10 years in Portland. I take great satisfaction in helping so-called nonwriters find and write stories from their lives and experiences. They walk into my room believing they don’t have what it takes to be a writer. I remind them if they follow their hearts, they will discover they are storytellers. As we all are at our core.

Some of these stories have nothing to do with La Grande or Union County. They do, however, have everything to do with life. If you are interested in contacting me to tell me your story, I’d like to hear from you.

— Tom Hallman Jr., [tbhbook@aol.com](mailto:tbhbook@aol.com)  
*Tom Hallman Jr. is a Pulitzer Prize-winning feature writer for the Oregonian newspaper. He’s also a writing coach and has an affinity for Union County.*

miles away from Montreal and all our relatives.

I recall a few letters back and forth between Frank and me, but soon the intervals between them lengthened until the correspondence stopped. Kids our age had no access to expensive long-distance phone calls. Letters written on paper and ink took a long time to arrive. I got busy adjusting to my American high school and I never saw Frank again. Or did I?

Flash forward to April 2021. I am living in Portland. This is my 11th city since leaving Montreal in 1958, but I have been here 40 years. I moved here in 1980 from Pittsburgh. I have a career and a life. Camp Pine Valley is a distant memory; I have to do research to even recall its name.

I’m still in touch with a couple of people who live in Pittsburgh. One is a professor at Carnegie-Mellon University. My friend contacts me when there’s news about someone we both knew back in the 1970s. Last April, my professor friend sent me an obituary from a Pittsburgh newspaper. On the same day, I received a second copy of the same obituary, from someone else in Pittsburgh whom I had not seen in decades.

The subject of the obituary was a well-known professor of the history of art and architecture in Pittsburgh. He had degrees from

McGill, Oberlin and Harvard. He had published nine books in his field, many of which recorded his findings from excavations of famous cathedral sites in Italy. He had won a Guggenheim Fellowship among other prestigious prizes. He was famous for his writings on architectural and cultural history. His name was Franklin.

There was nothing in the obituaries about his attendance at Camp Pine Valley, but this was definitely Franklin of the first kiss.

By some trick of memory, I do not recall meeting Frank when we both lived in Pittsburgh in the 1970s. Frank was then a young professor at Carnegie-Mellon University. He was married and I was newly single after a painful divorce. Somehow, 40 years after I left Pittsburgh, both of my friends from the 70s who sent me his obituary retained the memory that I knew Franklin.

Maybe Franklin’s name came up when I lived there. Maybe we met, disliked each other and I deleted the meeting from memory. Maybe I met him and told other friends about him. Maybe he never forgave me for dropping our teenage correspondence. Any of these scenarios is plausible; I just don’t recall.

I hold Franklin’s memory dear because his kiss awakened my young heart. That only happens once.

# Bank merger refreshes local man’s ties to area

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — When Umpqua Bank in Enterprise merges with Columbia Bank next year, it won’t be just a corporate merger; an Enterprise native will be at the helm.

In fact, Clint Stein already is the president and CEO of Columbia Bank, and while his career has taken him away from Wallowa County, he stays in touch.

“I keep track of what’s going on in Wallowa County,” he said.

Stein said he is still in contact with some from his growing-up years. He recalls teachers and coaches who are still here and was pleased to see the return of Tom Crane as interim superintendent. Crane was Stein’s junior high basketball coach in the mid-1980s.

“They taught you how to work hard but (were) supportive at the same time,” he said. “When you’re connected to Wallowa County, it’s nice to see people who were part of your life years ago.”

He also recalled people who have stayed here and prospered, such as Lance Homan, superintendent of Joseph Charter School. Homan was a freshman when Stein was a senior in high school.

“It’s nice to see someone go from being a kid to being a leader in the community,” Stein said.

**A native**

Stein was born in Enterprise, while his wife, the former Julie Findley, was born in Newberg and moved to Lostine at 4 years old. They both graduated from Enterprise High



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**A customer goes through the drive-thru window at the Umpqua Bank in Enterprise on Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. Next year, Umpqua will merge with Columbia Bank, of which Enterprise native Clint Stein is CEO and president.**

**UMPQUA BANK**

**What:** Merging with Columbia Bank

**Where:** 205 W Main St, Enterprise

**Phone:** 541- 426-3124

**Online:** [www.umpquabank.com](http://www.umpquabank.com)

School, Stein in 1990 and Julie in 1992.

After college, Stein returned to Enterprise. He worked for several certified public accountants and eventually became a CPA.

Julie got her start in banking at what was then Pioneer Bank — the building that now houses Umpqua Bank.

“That’s the building where she started her banking career and it’s where I had my first bank account as a kid,” he said.

Stein left Enterprise in 2005, but hasn’t forgotten what he learned here.

“It’s a great place to grow up. I enjoyed it as a kid and when I came back from college and started my work career,” Stein said. “I think the lessons you learn in a small town have served me well. ... A town like Enterprise, there’s no anonymity. You’re accountable to your neighbors. Small-town values continue to drive

me and how we lead the bank today.”

**The bank**

According to the Columbia Bank website, on Oct. 11, the bank’s board of directors approved the agreement to combine Columbia and Umpqua banks. Stein said that it will take several months to complete the state and federal regulatory processes and receive approval for the merger.

“We’re anticipating sometime the middle of next year,” he said. “That’s kind of our target.”

He said he anticipates little change in the Enterprise bank. The sign won’t change and there aren’t likely to be any job losses. If anything, Umpqua Bank will offer more. He said he anticipates the merger with Columbia will allow Umpqua to offer additional banking products and services.

Stein is eager for the merger to take place.

“I’m excited about the entire combination,” he said. “We’re the two premier banking franchises in the Northwest. I’m excited about the Enterprise location because that’s my hometown.”

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