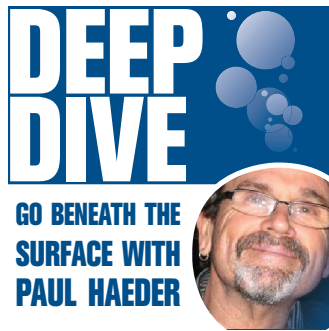


# Finding a path

Lost high school kid turned  
Newport businessman



*“The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance; the wise grows it under his feet.”*

—James Oppenheim

Baloo is more than 125 pounds. Ashton hits the scales at 45 pounds.

The canines’ owner, Charles “Chuck” Ellard, keeps them cozy in a back room of his Pacific Digital Works (formerly known as Lazerquick of Newport).

When the big Great Dane-Mastiff mix greets a willing customer, he’s a big baby. Ashton is quick and happy to also slobber over the customer.

Chuck is tall — 6’4” — and his eyes are intense black. He looks at you square on, listens intently, and has his own rat-ta-tat retorts when things get going upstairs in his head.

That’s usually 24/7, 365 days a year.

Deep Dive columns sometimes come to me when I end up as a customer of some local joint. In the case of Pacific Digital in Newport, next to JC Market, I had several projects for them to undertake — designing a brochure for a non-profit; scanning some of my Vietnam slides for my new short story collection; photocopying documents for a talk I did in Portland.

Service with a smile goes a long way, and Chuck is there interacting with customers.

## Formative years

He tells me his life story, a lot of it off the record. That’s okay with me, but many times — as I tell the 31-year-old Chuck — the best fodder for my column is the gritty and gutsy stuff of legends or just the events in life that demonstrate incredible resiliency.

He realizes now that his life has shifted from a fly-by-the-seat youth and young man to someone with employees to pay, bills to track and loans to keep on track.

“I’ve always been lazy, but when I hit high school, I didn’t like the structure of

the school,” he points out as we eat food at Mazatlán. That was Newport High. “I’d get my work done and then got bored. Got tired of the busy work. I missed 46 days of school my freshman year.”

He alludes to some little disruptive things in his life but, for the most part, Chuck says he just walked around town while ditching school. “I did nothing, and I know it sounds silly.”

Then sophomore year came around. “I knew I didn’t want to sit here, at school, all day.” That’s when he got hooked up with alternative high school. There were three hours a day in-school attendance and then the rest was up to him to find his path. He said he was excelling at the alternative school. “I did not want to be at the whim of the teacher’s work ethic. It was my work ethic that counted.”

He could have graduated his junior year, but he attributes laziness to having to drag it out by taking physics and wood shop classes as his final requirements. He didn’t walk in graduation.

He and I talk about today’s youth, the over-diagnosis of ODD, oppositional defiance order, a rather broad pseudo psychology label pasted onto guys like Chuck, even onto me at 63. We agree guys like Albert Einstein and women like Rachel Carson, if growing up today, would be put on IEPs or behavior plans as ODD and Attention Deficit Disorder.

His life and attitudes — he lives in Logsdan with his girlfriend Keely, 28, who’s from Chicago and assistant pool director for Newport. They live 25 miles from town on an acre and a half with their dogs fulfilling their need for rural lifestyle.

“Get this . . . the other day, I watched a wild turkey attack a deer. You don’t see that every day,” Chuck said with a laugh, emphasizing that the deer just looked exasperated and blasé about the fowl-vs-ungulate skirmish.

## The bullied ‘fat kid’

The year 2003 saw the 14-year-old Chuck Ellard overweight, sick and on a heavy course of antibiotics. Finally, that 5’10” chubby frame stretched six inches and shed 40 pounds in one year.

“I had no friends in school.”

Some of the formative years he alludes to — his dad wasn’t “present” as he was a self-centered, narcissist and superficial man. These are all Chuck’s words, with the caveat, “I love him to death.”

It’s clear the business end of things got rolling with his mother, Rose Reed, who bought the Lazerquick franchise with help



from her brother. That was 1999. They had moved from Hillsboro where the young Chuck went to McKinley Elementary.

He was good with wood working, and did roofing, framing and concrete work around the area post high school.

“All of a sudden I am inside and dry.” He ended up helping his mother in 2015. His mom, 67, bought out her brother. In 2006, Pacific Digital Works, Inc. was incorporated, but the name Lazerquick stuck.

In 2018, Chuck says his mother almost died. It was sink or swim for her son keeping the business afloat.

“I’ve always loved a challenge. The business was shoved onto me. Sink or swim. If this fails, then it’s your fault.”

I ran into Chuck Jan. 1, 2020, when he just took over the business. He was getting deep into the accounting side of things. He’s been spending money on advertising. He’s had a story on his business published in some local media.

Small town news — A new outdoor sign is up on the front of the business. He

attributes the graphics and logo style to one of his employees.

There are four full-time workers there, including Chuck. He says he pays a living wage, and when the eight hours are up, he expects his workers not to take the work home. He also understands low-wage jobs from his construction days where he had to take on a second job just to pay the bills.

He is his employees’ best advocate for self-care and downtime.

His biggest conundrum now is he doesn’t like it that a lot of people around town recognize him from the business. He’s a member of the chambers of commerce in Newport and Toledo.

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*Read on, as Deep Dive continues at [www.oregoncoasttoday.com](http://www.oregoncoasttoday.com)*

*Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, “Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam,” and a non-fiction book, “No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America’s Education System.”*