

Turning

Brendan Lee

As she turned,
Seasons came,
Seasons passed.

Her breath cool wind,
Calm soothing hot night.

Her voice in song birds.

A love song,
A hopeful song,
A future song
A past song,
A present song.

Turning of leaves,
Cooling of night

Turning morning,
Turning day,
Turning night.

Let's not go blindly into that next session**ALISON MCINTOSH**
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Too many Oregonians today are forced to choose between paying rent or buying groceries or medicine. Too many of us are busy looking for work, holding down two or three jobs, hunting for an apartment or affordable day care, or trying to hold off a foreclosure. Many others of us are trying hard to sleep through the night while worrying, or while sharing shelter space with dozens of other people.

In February, the Oregon Legislature will convene for a short, one-month session. This makes us anxious for yet another reason, holding our breath nervously in anticipation of what might occur in February. It is almost certain that we'll hear more grim news about the budget, and we're worried that the Legislature will act to do even more damage to our community's system of support for people facing hard times. During the last legislative session, there were cuts to emergency housing assistance and other housing programs, severe cuts to child care and work support programs, and more. There's nowhere left to cut, and many of these cuts have already gone too far.

We do need to be optimistic, positive and proactive, in spite of these hard times. So, while we take comfort in talking about all the reasons we have to be optimistic, including the shift in the political dialogue about income inequality that the Occupy movement began, it's also important to focus in on what we can do to be proactive — particularly as it relates to the Legislature.

The representatives and senators who will come together to face these issues in

The Housing Alliance brings together advocates, local governments, housing authorities, community development corporations, environmentalists, service providers, business interests and all others dedicated to increasing the resources available to meet our housing needs to support a common statewide legislative and policy agenda. Alison McIntosh is a Policy Manager with Neighborhood Partnerships.

February are our elected representatives, sent to Salem by us to manage our public resources and systems to keep our communities safe and intact. As they go to do this hard work, it's our job to step up and remind them what our priorities are as Oregonians, and stand beside them as they fight to do what's right.

Looking around us, we know that the public structures and systems that make up our safety net are not meeting the needs of far too many Oregonians today. We also feel in our hearts and know in our heads that we can make different choices. We can choose, as Oregonians, to help all of our neighbors get their basic needs met, and in the process, make our communities stronger and healthier for everyone.

Our state has tremendous resources at our disposal — hard working people, ingenuity and financial resources which can be brought to bear in order to build a better quality of life for everyone in our state. The state budget decisions we will make in February will reflect our commitment to making that future a reality.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "In our personal ambitions we are individualists. But in our seeking for

economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people."

Some of us seem to have forgotten that it is important how well we do together as a state and a nation. Our state budget benefits high-income taxpayers and businesses while leaving many more Oregonians homeless or on the brink of homelessness than ever before. Let's act together to make different choices — let's choose to protect those programs which help people stay in or find a place to call home, to stay warm, dry and fed, to have a chance at opportunity and a pathway out of poverty.

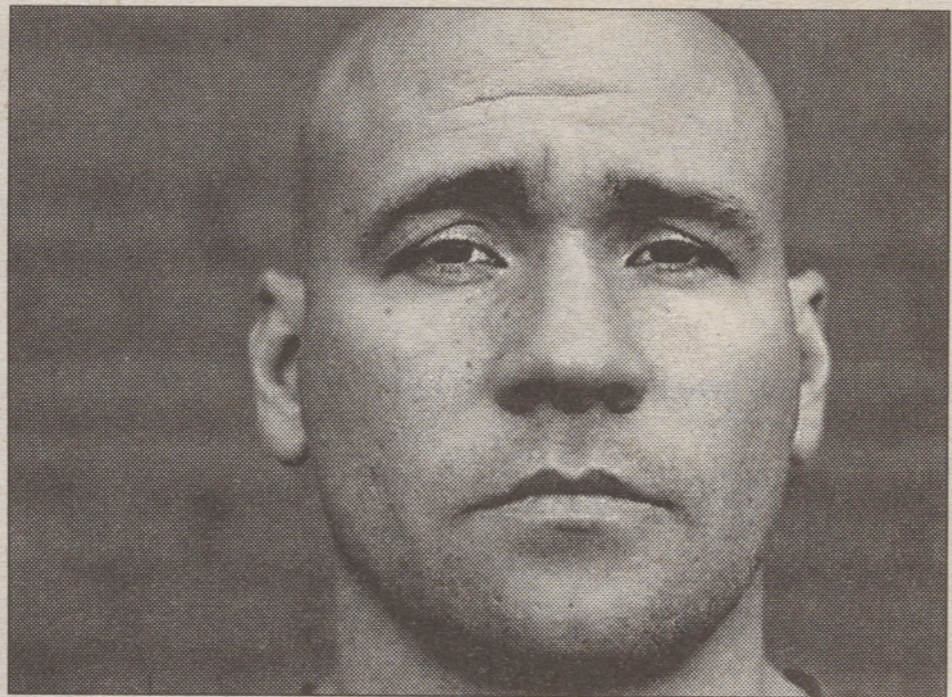
We obviously can't do this alone. We need our elected officials to make choices about the budget that reflect these priorities, that act on the certainty that we rise and fall as one. We need the Legislature to protect basic services and to seek every opportunity to raise additional revenue.

A few weeks ago, City Council candidate Steve Novick was quoted as saying that "The Occupy movement is helping some of us unlearn our learned helplessness." We — Portlanders, Oregonians, and people across the U.S. — have been helpless for far too long in the face of budget cuts and other crises such as homelessness and poverty. It's time to ask for more from our elected officials and our state budget. And, it's time to ask more of ourselves in this process.

If you're interested in taking action but don't quite know where to start, you can always email me (amcintosh@neighborhoodpartnerships.org) and learn more about the Housing Alliance.

"Meteorologists ought to have to list their phone numbers and addresses on the news when forecasting the weather."

— Jason Breedlove



Let me accompany you each day next year on your Android device. Breedlove Calendar Quotes is available for 99 cents on the Android Market; a calendar widget that syncs with your Google Calendar. Every day for a year you'll see entries cleverly written by me. Thank you and happy New Year!

At the Warming Shelter

By Katherine Benson

You hear about the restraining order that's been violated for the third time that week

How the government doesn't give a shit about us folks at the bottom, but it's keeping track of us through our cell phones and GPS

You hear about her baby's daddy losing the child support at Seven Feathers last month

— *Now, that's messed up.*

How for two ninety-five you can get a decent breakfast at the Good Sam cafeteria; she's talking real scrambled eggs, now, and high-class organic coffee

— *For real?*

And, hell, for two bucks why not ride a warm, dry streetcar the whole day

— *Sure, just don't fall asleep, or they'll kick your ass off*

You're joking, right?

— *It's the God's honest truth; she's seen it happen*

How for a so-called warming shelter it sure is drafty in here

You hear about the neighbors who got her thrown out of the building for complaining about the white supremacist down the hall
How, no matter what, a girl shouldn't let herself go (like that sorry looking thing in the corner)

— *It's like Shania Twain said, you got to keep a routine*

You hear about the grandson in rehab at the VA whose job was to pick up the pieces of his dead comrades in Iraq

And how her faith in Jesus Christ has seen her through worse times than this

You hear about the brother on parole, the sister in recovery, and vice versa

You hear how her blood pressure meds are going to run out a month before her benefits kick in

How people "out there" pretend they don't hear you when all you're asking for is the freakin' time

— *Screw 'em*

And how all you really need is a damn job

— *Amen to that!*

Because once you got yourself a steady paycheck all the pieces of your life fall neatly into place.

