

For the RECORD

A compilation of facts, large and small, about our community

- Acres of land in the Oregon State Forest system: 821,000
- Percent of Oregon forestland owned by the state: 3
- Percent of Oregon forestland owned by the federal government: 59
- Dollars budgeted for firefighting by the U.S. Forest Service: 1 billion
- Square miles burned by wildfires in the U.S. in 2014, as of July 23: 2,471
- Square miles burned by wildfires in Oregon and Washington in 2014, as of July 23: 1,394
- Number of native snake species slithering about Oregon: 15
- Number of poisonous snakes out of those 15 species: 1
- Number of feet Haystack Rock at Cannon Beach, the third largest coastal monolith in the world, rises out of the ocean: 235
- Number of years ago that the Grand Ronde Mountains lava flows created Haystack Rock: 10 to 17 million
- Number of Cooling Centers opened in Multnomah County to help the elderly and disabled residents during extreme temperatures: 4
- Number of immigration detention centers scattered across the United States as of 2011: 204
- Amount the federal government pays private detention centers per detainee per day: \$80-\$120
- Amount that a detainee costs the detention center per day: \$30 (approx.)
- The number of immigrants that the Secure Communities program designed by Congress to "detect national security threats" requires ICE to detain and deport each year: 400,000

Sources: Oregon Dept. of Forestry; Oregonian; Dept. of Housing and Urban Development; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon Blue Book; US Geological Survey; 211-Info; National Immigrant Justice Center

Getting back in stride, pen in hand

BY SARAH HANSELL
STAFF WRITER

Tim Brennan's short stories blend fantasy and fact: In one, the scene is the greenery of Washington Park. He's watching a Shakespeare in the Park performance in the hottest part of the summer. It's less than two years since the car crash that broke a long list of bones on the right side of his body. He's still in a great deal of pain so he's sitting still, and a stranger approaches.

In another, he's living in a Salvation Army shelter. It's somewhere between two and three in the early, dusky morning and two men are exchanging blows and blood. So they're thrown out onto the street. Together. He knows one of them will end up seriously hurt. It's the same day when he walks past a tobacco store across from the train station and sees blood being sprayed off the ground. It was a man from the shelter, somebody says, who jumped from the parking garage.

He writes a story about a man in a mental institution in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by stone walls, with no guards or rules. An old friend of his in a cell across the room draws with charcoal on the walls — drawings that use negative space, that only make sense when you look beyond the image, at the space around the charcoal slashes and swirls. The man spends his days plotting his escape. But in fact he's not in a mental institution at all, but in a coma. Everyone who speaks to him in the institution is someone in the hospital. The head of the institution is the dying woman in the bed next to him.

Each of these is the plot of one of Tim Brennan's short stories — blends of his own experience and his imagination.

"When you get home and you have these emotions and you kind of want to decompress and compartmentalize them, it kind of helps to put them into words," he said.

Tim's been writing since his first story in kindergarten. In one of his original stories, he falls off his bike, breaks a leg and dies because his mother doesn't get to him in time.

"I had to have a parent-teacher conference," he said.

When he was younger, he read authors like Dean Koontz and Stephen King — books "he wasn't incredibly proud of" — until his high school English teacher introduced him to "Crime and Punishment."

"My high school teacher said, 'You seem like the kind of guy who would really like

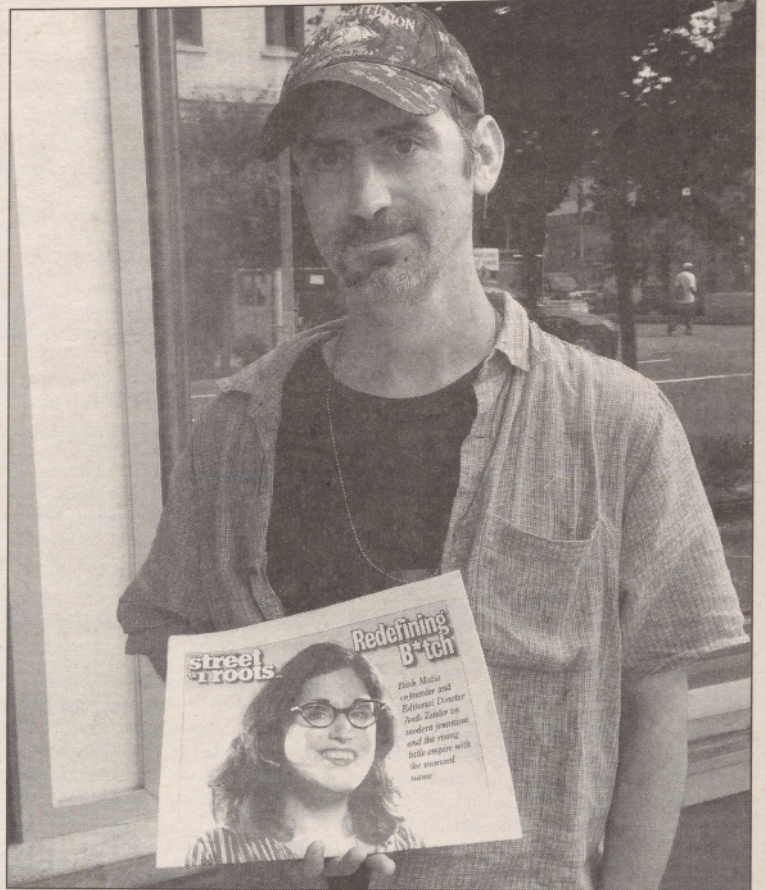


PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

'Crime and Punishment,' and I didn't get the joke until years later," he said. "That I was going to get myself in trouble one day."

Since then, he's devoured anything from Mikhail Bulgakov to Haruki Murakami.

After high school, he went to community college for a year and a half, but it wasn't for him.

"I didn't like being stuck in a classroom," he said.

He used to live in Baltimore, and traveled around the East Coast. He was friends with an artistic crowd, and did creative work for them like taking photographs and running sound machines for their post-graduate projects. In mid-2005 he decided — after a bad couple of months — that it was time to leave Baltimore, so he packed up for Portland, where he'd visited years before and liked.

"I just packed my bag, quit my job, put all my money in my pocket and moved out here," he said.

He worked in tech support for a while, but when his roommate skipped town, he couldn't afford his apartment and ended up living outside.

In 2007, a week before he was scheduled to move into an apartment, he was hit full

force by a car as he crossed Broadway and Lincoln. He broke his ankle, knee, shoulder, pelvis in two places and fractured two vertebrae

"If it hadn't been for the car, I would've been housed eight years ago," he said.

He was in a coma for a week and in the hospital for about two more weeks before he was moved to the Henry Building, where he lived for three more months before going back to the streets.

"Right around Christmas I had to teach myself to walk because they were kicking me out, and I would not have made it on the street in a wheelchair," he said.

He was living outside until he found housing in 2011. Because of pain related to the injuries he sustained in the car accident, he couldn't work.

"It wasn't viable. I could do the work, but I couldn't guarantee I'd be there," he said.

Now, he's been selling Street Roots for about five years and continues to write short stories, hoping to get one published someday.

Say hello to Tim at his regular turf, outside the Food Front Co-Op at Thurman Street and 23rd Avenue in Northwest Portland.

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Answers to puzzles on page 15

