



ARTWORK BY ALEX LILLY

In loving memory of old Portland

I had the pleasure of being asked to read a short eulogy, along with other longtime Portlanders this past week at a funeral for Old Portland.

The funeral was held to pay respects to a Portland that has been lost in the past 20-plus years. It was one of several events in August put together by Hand2Mouth Theatre

and supported by Oregon Humanities looking at how Portland has changed through the lens of Gus Van Sant's film, "My Own Private

Idaho." The eulogy is below.

Portland has left us with an amazing and troubled legacy.

Over the years, Portland captured the hearts and minds of many people, many of whom are here with us today.

Prior to her death, Portland influenced countless counter-cultural movements. Known for her support of social justice activism and the arts, she believed that regardless of a particular individual or group's lot in life everyone had something to contribute.

She left behind hundreds, if not thousands, of poems, books, movies and songs for future generations to

study and enjoy.

According to many people that knew Portland well – Portland was very passive-aggressive, very rarely ever saying what he or she actually meant.

Somewhat judgmental, always freaky and almost always stoned – Portland always walked her own way.

During downtime, Portland enjoyed long walks in the park, spray painting graffiti under the I-5 viaduct, biking and self-publishing witty, and at times, unreadable zines.

Unfortunately, Portland also had a dark side.

The medical examiner reported that Portland died of greed-borne illness out of years of redlining, racism and the lack of political will to support people experiencing poverty.

More so, after looking at Portland's DNA, it was determined that the Portland 20 years ago wasn't all that different than the Portland today. Besides higher rents and a tech-boom, it is still a predominantly liberal, white city with thousands of people sleeping on the streets. Moderate Republicans claiming to be Democrats continue to make money hand over fist.

Some have argued that Portland's fortitude and openness to social

change and free-market capitalism left the city better in a better place.

Still, underneath Portland's success; the boutiques, the green ways and the shine – there still lays a layer of dirt and grime.

Portland grew up in a complicated time.

Her father, an abusive man that stole the Native's land.

Her mother, a drug boss and law enforcement official responsible for the War on Drugs and flooding our city with heroin and crack cocaine – helping contribute to thousands of deaths and thousands more going to prison for non-violent drug offenses.

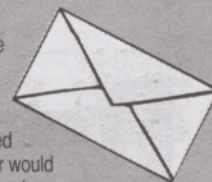
Portland left behind two children, one that now lives in New York and is a successful fashion designer and another who ended up homeless and traumatized for life after being forced to do unimaginable things to survive.

Portland said, days before her death, "My life has been complicated, but the coffee is brewing, the whiskey is flowing and the music is still playing. We are a sustainable city filled with hope, creativity and innovation. What more do you want from me?"

Old Portland will always remain in the hearts and minds of the people who lived and worked in her green city. Loved and hated, Old Portland will be missed by some and remembered by many.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

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