

weight because we were eating a lot of salads. We had one of those water coolers people have at football games. We had ice in there – milk, condiments, cold cuts, salads. Flip over the lid, and it's a picnic table."

She was going to AA meetings, sometimes three or four a day. By this time, she had come to realize that her drinking had become a problem.

"It had got to the point where I didn't know what to do anymore," she says.

She and her daughter lived in the car for six months. Then, a woman at AA who was about to have knee surgery offered Carolyn, her daughter and the cat a room in her house in exchange for help while she recuperated.

They spent six months there, during which time Carolyn, who, at times, she said, could barely walk, had her long-overdue hip replacement. A few weeks after she had the surgery, the woman gave them a no-cause eviction.

At this point, Carolyn's daughter was 18.

"We decided for both of us to survive, it was best to split up," Carolyn says.

Carolyn's church had connected her with Northwest Pilot Project, where she was working with a housing specialist to improve her rentability.

She was on waitlists for housing, but there was nothing available. She couldn't go to a shelter because she was still recuperating from surgery, and she wasn't able to climb onto a bunk bed or use a toilet without a raised seat.

"Another character-building situation," she says, and smiles.

NWPP secured her a room in a motel for a month, and from there, a bed in a long-term shelter – Pixel came too.

In August 2016, a studio apartment downtown, where she was waitlisted, became available. She moved in a month later.

At 57, it's the first time in her life she's lived alone – aside from Pixel, of course.

"It's been an adjustment," she says, smiling.

With help from the Easter Seals, she got a full-time job as a pharmacy technician in North Portland. She takes the MAX train to and from work, working various shifts, often getting home late at night.

"I really like living downtown," she says. "The buses and MAX are spectacular. I help out at a church nearby. I go to the library."

CAROLYN WILL

She's cooking again. "I make hot fudge sauce and cookies."

Her daughter, "my backbone, my support through all of this," is doing fine, living in a small apartment with her boyfriend.

Her son, on leave from the Navy, stayed at her apartment for a few days and fell in love with downtown Portland.

Carolyn is sorting through boxes from her storage unit right now.

"It brings up memories that I don't want." She gazes into the distance. "There's still a lot of loss."

But, says Carolyn Will, making a joke about her last name: "Where there's a will, there's a way." She sighs, smiles slightly and says, "I had to have that perspective."

Wave of Pride

by Melle

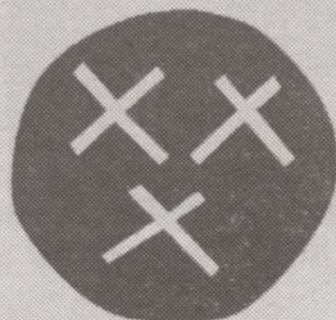
My rainbow is a wave,
rippling to the sunset under the West Coast ocean.
I cannot stop watching the Earth move
My blue, is the motion

My yellow is the high tide,
rolling with the whales
I swim with them
My orange, is telling its tale

My purple is swell in the flow,
swaying there under the perfect sand
I splash in it
My red, is my footprints on land

My green is the East Coast sunrise,
with a perfect wave to ride
I touch the salty cold
My rainbow, is everywhere I cannot hide

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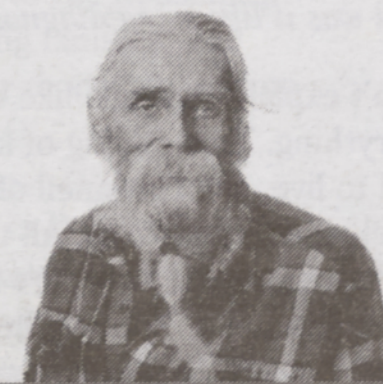
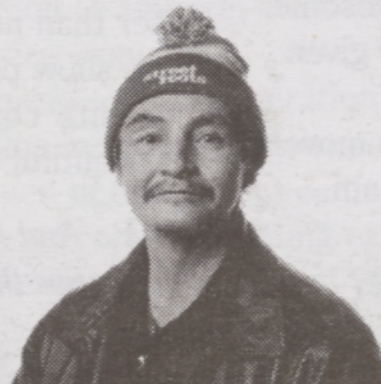
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