

Best of Eugene

2003



Best Peacemaker and Best Chef (Soriah): Ibrahim Hamide

Strangest job: Catering Alan Siporin's wedding. It was at Clark Creek and we had nothing to work with but an old water pump. It was like the wild West days, in the middle of nowhere with no facilities. Yet we put up this feast.

Best paranormal experience: One time I was cutting down a Christmas tree up near Cougar Reservoir and I parked the truck I was using with the brakes on and everything in gear. My little girl had fallen asleep in the truck and I left her sleeping there. As I went across the road to cut the tree down, the truck began rolling and it looked like it was going straight into the reservoir and I was too far away to run to it and do anything. Instead, I knelt down, turned my hands skyward and prayed. Then this little twig of a tree — no bigger than my thumb in diameter — held that truck from going over. That was the only thing I could see holding the truck back and it was too small to hold it. I never even figured out why the truck rolled — all the brakes were on.

Wildcard: What is the connection between food and peace? Food is eternal as we are, we exist with food and perish without food. To me, we each have such an individual experience with food: Some see it as fuel and wolf it on the run, and some people meditate over their meal. To me, there is always an interaction between food and us. Hardly anybody closes their eyes when they eat. In the food business, we try to engage all the senses.

When you feed somebody, you don't have the intention of hurting them. Those two things are diametrically opposed. In my culture, if your enemy comes into your house, you must wait on them three days before you even ask them what they are there for. You must feed them and offer them sanctuary. That brings the best out of people and so does peace. Food nurtures their body and peace nurtures their souls — the two are very interconnected.

What do time travel, mullets, '64 Dodge Darts, Cougar Reservoir and translating on a Soviet canning ship have in common? Absolutely nothing, yet all make an appearance in our 2003 Best of Eugene Readers' Poll. For four weeks in August, we ran a ballot in our paper asking readers to pick their favorites for categories ranging from Best Hairdresser to Best Place To Shake Your Booty to Best Soup.

After weeks of tallying hundreds upon hundreds of ballots, winners finally emerged in most of the categories. Some categories had no clear winner. Where possible, we included a first, second and third place.

We had some nice surprises, some repeats, some typical Eugene answers and some sarcastic responses. Despite its recent troubles, FOOD for Lane County emerged victorious in two categories: Best Local Cause and Best Non-Profit. The readers say the anarchists are the Best Hope for Eugene and one person rose to the top of two categories: Café Soriah owner and Eugene Middle East Peace Group member Ibrahim Hamide, who won Best Peacemaker and Best Chef. Peace and good food: What's more Eugene than that?

Here, we randomly selected a few winners and tossed three questions at them: What was the strangest job you ever had? What was your best out of body or other paranormal experience? And the third was a wildcard. Each winner could ask and answer a question, or we just made one up on the spot and threw it at them. Here are their off-the-cuff responses.

Congratulations to all the winners!