

# One Fine Celebration

Tamales, high notes, trail vows and a wolfish ring-bearer

Last week, Laura Saxe and my son Josh had a lot more fun getting married than I did 38 years ago. I had followed all the rules. The virgin Mary walked down the aisle in a white dress (albeit a short cotton one). At the end of that aisle stood my United Presbyterian minister father; four bridesmaids in matching flowered dresses; and four grooms and my fiancé, O'B, all in suits. After the church service, in which my father gave a sermon he had given in other weddings, everyone got a piece of white-frosted cake and lemonade. O'B and I did do one thing we really wanted to do that day: in the late afternoon we headed out to begin an eight-week camping trip that would end in Madison, Wisc., for graduate school.

Pregnant Laura and Josh, on the other hand, did everything they wanted to for their three-day, 50-guest beach wedding on the Oregon Coast. The day before the wedding, Josh and Laura hiked with us along an estuary, crossed the spit beside a patch of endangered Western lilies, and returned by beach in time for steamed tamales Josh had brought up from Davis.

"Oh," a gas station attendant had asked him when he saw Josh's steamer. "Do you play in one of those steel bands?"

"Well, actually it's a tamale steamer for a wedding," Josh answered.

"Do you cater weddings?" the attendant tried again hopefully.

"Well, actually it's *my* wedding," Josh added.

"Boy, *someone* is getting a good catch!" he concluded triumphantly.

The night before the wedding we had a competition to decorate six small cakes. The team of Laura's outrageous Aunt Jane from Mexico won the "cheesiest" award, with its miniature brides, grooms and champagne glasses. My team won the "most spiritual" award with its array of grass flowering heads and rose petals hijacked from the front yard.

The morning of the wedding Josh led another hike to Cape Lookout. My African-American nephew from Washington, D.C., wondered aloud about whether he would see something unusual, and said he'd heard that bald eagles have three-foot wingspans. A few minutes later he spotted six seals far below, and a bald eagle soared above our heads.

A Peruvian-Mexican friend of Laura's has a license from the Internet to perform marriages, so she started the wedding by explaining the agenda. First Aunt Jane and Laura's mother Barbara would sing "Ash Grove." I don't know whether it was the damp air or emotion, but Aunt Jane crashed twice on the high notes with endearing hilarity.

Then folks could tell stories about Josh and Laura. No one knew this was coming, so there wasn't a polished story among them, but each was memorable. Biology graduate student Jim Martin played guitar and sang a song he and one of Laura's friends had written 45 minutes earlier. "Laura, Laura, what you gonna do?" introduced each verse, which was about Josh regularly turning up late, cooking dinner slowly, and taking most of the night to eat.

Laura and Josh next told stories about each other. Laura told how when they first began to live together five years ago, Josh had not paid much attention to her border collie, Jackson, because he's a domestic animal. Once she reminded him that this was a descendant of wolves, Jackson entered Josh's heart. Josh told of listening to Laura sing softly one night when she thought he was asleep, and of dancing recently in an all-too-rare Davis rain.

And vows. "Jackson," Laura called to her wolf descendent, who made his way up to Laura from among the rest of us. Tied in his red neckerchief were two silver rings. Jackson stood patiently looking up at his two friends as they announced their intention to live together the rest of their lives. Josh and Laura promised (among other things) to walk hand in hand along a thousand trails in the woods (Josh's passion) and watch basketball games together (Laura's).

After our home-cooked dinner, a number of us stood together on the beach, watching seals, seagulls and pelicans mob fish as the evening darkened. Worlds – human, domestic and wild – had all been married during this one, fine celebration. It had followed all the truly *essential* rules.



**JOSH AND LAURA**

"Jackson," Laura called to her wolf descendent, who made his way up to Laura from among the rest of us. Tied in his red neckerchief were two silver rings. Jackson stood patiently looking up at his two friends as they announced their intention to live together the rest of their lives.

Mary O'Brien of Eugene has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She can be reached at [mob@efn.org](mailto:mob@efn.org)

## TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### HEART OF OUR CITY

Those of us who have been downtown for many years or have opened businesses downtown within the last few years are excited to see a renewed interest in what we consider to be the heart of our city. We greet the plans for new retail, living and office space with enthusiasm.

It is reassuring that the developers involved are all familiar with this community and have announced an interest in doing something that will make Eugene a better place. We appreciate the potential for this project to open up new opportunities for businesses to occupy well-maintained space that is affordable and viable.

Clearly there is a lot of space to fill, and a lot of planning yet to do. As independent retailers, it is our hope that the retail brought to Downtown Eugene will be as eclectic as the city itself. It is critically important to have many different kinds of retail in a given area to make it successful. We hope that the visions of Connor and Woolley and the Guistinas include local retailers who offer shopping experiences that can't be found elsewhere. Local businesses can provide an experience that caters specifically to residents and visitors of Eugene and Lane County.

Downtown Eugene already offers many great shopping, dining and entertainment options. With the investment of Connor and Woolley and the Guistinas, those options can blossom more fully. Hopefully what grows will be something that reflects the personality of which Eugeneans have always been so proud.

Reisa Maddex,

Footwise The Birkenstock Store

Stacy Bierma

Harlequin Beads & Jewelry

Aimee Allen & Ken Herrin, Letterhead

Lisa & Norman Read, Freudian Slip

### DOWNTOWN BUZZ

There is this buzz in the air, a palpable energy over our downtown revitalization possibilities, with major property owners voicing their intentions. Then there are these passionate creative visionaries such as Don Kahle

with his recent thoughts on Eugene as a great riverfront city with a grand parkway flowing through it. This connection between Eugene and its surrounding environment, reconnecting people with nature, seems a natural!

Another recent inspiring editorial envisioned Eugene as an arts destination. With the recent additions to our arts community of DIVA, Opus VI and the reopening of the Schnitzer Art Museum we are well on our way.

I attended the June First Friday Art Walk and wandered about on foot. It was actually bustling with activities and people. If you haven't been downtown lately, you should check it out. Each new piece that is added to the puzzle draws more anticipation. Eugene feels right on the brink of some good, positive change. Talk of a major grocery store is great, though I personally wish it were a local grocer such as Market of Choice being considered. This all reminds me of the line in the movie *Field of Dreams*: "If you build it, they will come." We have our collective "Downtown of our Dreams" and similarly, if they build it, we will have to come to make it a success!

Let's keep the ideas flowing, the discussion happening and the passion rising! These are exciting times locally, let's work together and enjoy them. Let's make this fun. How about a theme song, maybe "On Broadway," or Petula Clark's "Downtown"? Just a thought.

Tim Boyden

Eugene

### SERVING THE RULERS

Many officers involved with the Eugene and Springfield police departments have a history of abusing their authority. The recent murder of an unarmed Thurston High School student should make people in this community aware of the importance of monitoring the actions of police who victimize those who they are allegedly supposed to protect.

The police and those in authority have always used their power to suppress the efforts made by compassionate people to build a