

40 Perfect Years

Together and independent

Remember Konrad Lorenz's experiments on imprinting? He found that if a gosling's first companion was a human rather than an adult goose, the gosling would follow the human around.



I may have gotten my concept of what a friend is by imprinting on Jimmy Bentley. He was my next-door neighbor and best buddy for the first seven or eight years of my life. We never argued. When we got together to play, Jimmy would suggest an idea, say roller-skating around the block. If I didn't want to do that, I'd suggest an alternative. We'd bounce back and forth until we both liked an idea, and off we'd go. We always had fun.



Forty years ago this month, I set off on an eight-week camping trip and a Jimmy Bentley life with O'B after our simple morning wedding. I was 16 years old when I spotted O'B in a high school to which I had recently transferred. He didn't notice me, but I noticed him: He was always polite with whomever he was talking or walking. I thought, "I'm going for this guy," and did.

To this day I am astonished at my 16-year-old instincts and lifelong good fortune. Each to one's own, but here's my list of what has made for 40 (to me) perfect years:

- **Support for independence.** I've been able to have my own life and work. No matter how many days or weeks I'm away, I've never heard a complaint. Instead, a cheerful, "Hi Rabbit!" has greeted me whenever I call or arrive home. Likewise, I've made spectacularly non-monetary choices for work over the years, but have never heard advice to the contrary. All I have heard is interest in whatever unprofitable work had seemed worthwhile to do.
- **Seeing humor in foibles.** You've got to hand it to someone who, riding shotgun, exclaims, "It's so exciting to take a ride with you!" after I've twice in one morning started driving up the wrong way on a one-way street. Think about the useless alternative responses.
- **Sharing tasks.** Whether taking half care of our two boys (and the runaway 15-year old we took in), or half care of house tasks and cooking (except when our children were around and they too helped), it's been a fair deal all the way around.
- **Decency to all.** It's a comfort knowing that O'B treats others as decently as he treats me. I'm not sure why that's such a comfort, but it is.
- **Love of life.** Hiking on a backpack trip, reading aloud to each other, grubbing out blackberries or getting some tape at a hardware store – it's always fun. And peaceful.

A good relationship like this isn't unique. I spent last Memorial Day weekend with a couple who, for 47 years, have been ranching, cougar-hunting, raising two children and working to protect jaguars from extinction near the Mexican border. The same affection, humor, independent lives, task-sharing and decency to all were there. A photo on their mantle shows a 19-year old young woman and a lanky 20-year old young man, both in jeans, about to set off on a week-long camping trip after their simple morning wedding.

On Memorial Day I thought of the war-crafted rows upon rows of white crosses. Under each of those crosses lies a life cut short. Whether the person who rests beneath any given cross believed their early death was worth it or not, the multiplicity of those crosses didn't come from good relationships. Why so often we make life miserable for each other is partly a mystery and partly a realization that we're not so different from our primate relatives as we might want to pretend.

I can only be grateful that I've had 40 years (and more) of dawn. I'd love to get a thank-you to Jimmy.

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

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WISHING HIM WELL

While the May 31 Slant column harshly catalogues editorial disagreements with aspects of departing Eugene City Manager Dennis Taylor's tenure, I do think that a nod to some of his best qualities is in order.

While I am admittedly more focused upon county rather than city issue intricacy, I have, from afar, seen Dennis Taylor in a far different, albeit perhaps less informed, light.

While the new signs were being erected in an outdoor ceremony for the renaming of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard from Centennial Boulevard, a project I helped initiate, I spoke at length with Taylor for the first time on a street corner. From that conversation, I gleaned that he had deep commitment to human rights and diversity, and had a basic sympathy to the historic people — first legacy of the Democratic Party. He conveyed that both he and his father had been loyal partisans to Robert F. Kennedy in Kansas and had played roles in that historic campaign.

I have watched Taylor assist the City Council during the most contentious of meetings — always facilitating complex issues with courtesy and diplomacy. I also watched him doggedly advocate for the city in its confrontation with the commission on the enterprise zone negotiations several years ago.

We should not lose sight of the fact that Eugene's politics are riven down the middle, that city government is a huge and unwieldy herd of cats and that City Charter delineations of authority can always be changed via a vote of the people — but not through unilateral alterations by any manager.

Having seen city managers since 1965, I believe that Dennis Taylor has projected a core personal kindness and patient persona — despite the inevitable brickbats and harshly personalized criticism over this or that transient issue. We all should wish him well in his future life in Montana and thank him for those patient labors that escape the front page and controversy of the moment.

Scott Bartlett
Eugene

FOLLOW THE PEOPLE

In the early 1970s I worked at the Brooklyn Museum and often attended Manhattan art openings. Frequently we'd end up at Broome Street Bar. It was in the middle of the 43 blocks eventually to be known as SoHo. It was utterly dark at night, with nothing open except this tavern. Home of the world's best burger, it was the place to go for pioneering artists who found cheap loft spaces to live in (illegally) in this abandoned industrial quarter. Eventually the city surrendered and rezoned SoHo for residential use. In a few years it became one of the world's hippest gallery and shopping districts.

From 1999 to 2001 I lived on Peachtree Street in midtown Atlanta, an area that had recently improved through renovation of classic but run-down homes. My first year there were almost no stores save a convenience store, one all-night club and scattered eateries. Then a lot of folks got tired of insane commutes and started moving into "lofts" on Peachtree Street. By 2001 every loft had been sold with more being built, and there was a major supermarket, galleries, boutiques, gourmet restaurants and vital commercial activity everywhere.

The point? If Eugene does all it can to develop housing downtown for all sectors of our population, we will reach a turning point, and business will thrive. Business follows people — especially artists, entrepreneurs and other urban pioneers. Not one nickel of subsidy is needed for parking or tax benefits for "business development" to make downtown thrive. I promise.

Bob Ransom
Eugene

NOT TERROR

My wife gave birth to our first child last week. Like most new parents, I find myself looking forward with a new appreciation to the next 20 years and beyond, wondering how her life will develop and how the world will be when she reaches maturity.

Unfortunately, that vision is looking

WHO YOU GONNA BLAME?

EDITORIAL Editor Ted Taylor
News Editor Alan Pittman **Reporter** Camilla Mortensen
Arts & Music Editor Molly Templeton
Performing & Visual Arts/Copy Editor Suzi Steffen
Calendar Editor Chuck Adams
Contributing Editor Anita Johnson
Contributing Writers Bryan Andersen, Sara Brickner, Jason Blair, Joshua Blanchard, Jes Burns, Brett Campbell, Rachael Carnes, Wade Christiansen, Michael Cockram, David Constantin, John Dooley, Rachel Foster, Phillip Getty, James Johnston, Zach Klassen, Sarah Mazze, Sharleen Nelson, Mary O'Brien, Aaron Ragan-Fore, Vanessa Salvia, Steven Sawada, Sally Sheklow, Lance Sparks, Eva Sylwester, Adrienne van der Valk
Interns Amanda Burhop, Erin Rokita, Deanna Uutela

ART DEPARTMENT
Art Director/Production Manager Kevin Dougherty
Graphic Artist/Webmaster James Bateman
Graphic Artists Shannon Browning, Todd Cooper, Barbara Cooper
Intern Carly Kratzer **Baby** Samara Cooper
Contributing Photographers Kurt Jensen, Paul Neevel

ADVERTISING
National Sales Manager Mark Frisbee
Display Marketing Consultant Jennifer Donohue, Nate Krusi, Rob Weiss
Advertising Traffic Coordinator Geneva "Goddess" Miller
Classified Manager Jennifer Donohue
Classified Marketing Consultant Janus Bredzinsky, Aspen Rosen

BUSINESS **Director of Sales and Marketing** Bill Shreve
Circulation Manager Danica Stiles **Baby** Persaeus Eilah Zapata Stiles
Controller Paula Hoemann **Distributors** Bob Becker, Matt Bryson, Margaret Garrison, Tobin Herrera, Susan and David Lawson, Tim Risch, Quick Draw, Pedalers Express **Printing** Signature Graphics

HOW TO REACH US BY E-MAIL:
 (letters): editor@eugeneweekly.com
 (advertising): ads@eugeneweekly.com
 (classifieds): classy@eugeneweekly.com
 (personals): personals@eugeneweekly.com
 (calendar): cal@eugeneweekly.com
 (music/clubs/special shows): music@eugeneweekly.com
 (art/openings/galleries): visualarts@eugeneweekly.com
 (performance/theater): performance@eugeneweekly.com
 (literary arts/readings): books@eugeneweekly.com
 (movies/film screenings): movies@eugeneweekly.com
 (circulation): distribution@eugeneweekly.com
 We miss you Drew "Rockstar" Harrison