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OREGON COUNTRY FAIR 2007

Growing Up at the Fair

Advice from
an expert

by Molly Cram



TODD COOPER

For four days a year I had the opportunity to escape to another world: The Oregon Country Fair. Booth 596 was scrawled on my hand in permanent marker, lasting the long weekend, in case I was lost.

Growing up at the Fair was just a part of my life. I never regarded the herds of people coming in with fairy wings and painted breasts and funny beards as strange or weird or peculiar. I would sit in my tie-dye dress and give "two bit advice, 25 cents, any topic, for five minutes" to anyone who would ask.

It started when two booth members, Ellie and her brother Casey, and I found an old, beat-up sign when I was 8. We were sent to get ice on that Thursday and thought, "Hey, we could do that!" So we did. We set up four chairs in front of our booth, one for the one asking for advice, and waited with the sign and a paper cup. It was a hit. On that Friday the line of people who wanted advice from a 6-, 8- and 10-year-old was a long one. On Saturday we set up three lines and each gave our own advice to each customer because of how long the line was — and because we promised five minutes of continuous advice. We even had a television crew interview us for the news that day. By Sunday I was the only one left of the three of us, for we had very short attention spans.

Ellie and Casey went on with their own crafts — walking sticks and buttons and necklaces — but I continued with the advice until I was 12. It was me in pigtails with the sign and two chairs, waiting patiently for a customer. The questions ranged from "What's good to eat here?" to "Should I move in with my boyfriend?" I loved the questions, and they loved the advice.

Now my line of customers has dwindled. I no longer sit with the sign because I am no longer 8 and as cute as I was — though some of my loyal customers will ask for me when they see the sign hanging on the booth. I love to give them advice, and for only a quarter, it's worth it to ask. I've grown up at the fair, and I've changed from that girl in pigtails to a teenager, but the fair itself has not changed. The fair is in a time capsule, the same as it was when it started with a few hundred more people. And I believe that is how it should be.

ew

Molly Cram started attending the fair when she was a couple of months old. She is now 16 and will be a junior at South Eugene High School next year, but you can find her this weekend at Booth 596, Raccoon Cabin.

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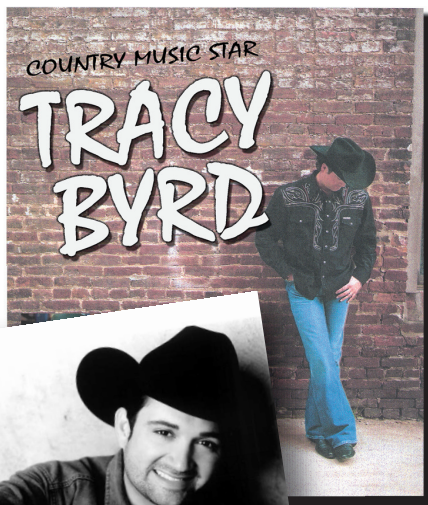


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