

PURPOSE

IT BRINGS ENERGY TO OUR LIVES

A corporate lawyer defends little guys, Astoria man saves a significant home

A Seattle woman whom I've known for 40 years wanted to write a book about people who have heard God speak to them.

Her concept did not gain traction, but I think she's got a good idea.

How we find purpose in our lives sometimes seems random. There is often an element of luck and timing. Many of us also would say providence has played a role in finding what the existentialists call "our project."



Steve Forrester

Purpose walked into Rob Bilott's law office in the form of a West Virginia farmer. The farmer, who found Bilott through a family connection, described his cattle mysteriously dying and neighbors with unaccountable health problems.

Writing in the current issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, Nathaniel Rich calls Bilott "The lawyer who became DuPont's worst nightmare." This abrupt turn in Bilott's life was incongruous, because Bilott's law firm defended large corporate clients like Dow; they weren't in the business of helping little guys.

Bilott's odyssey transported him from a comfortable blue chip corporate law practice to life as a dogged courtroom champion of farmers who had been harmed by a corporate polluter and stiffed by federal and state regulators.

Here is the picture Rich gives us of the transformed lawyer. "Bilott doesn't regret fighting DuPont for the last 16 years, nor for letting PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) consume his career. But he is still angry. 'The thought that DuPont could get away with this for this long,' Bilott says, his tone landing halfway between wonder and rage, 'that they could keep making a profit off it, then get the agreement of the governmental agencies to slowly phase it out, only to replace it with an alternative with unknown human effects — we told the agencies about this in 2001, and they've essentially done nothing.'"

Historians and Jungian psychologists talk about how human affairs shift when a man or woman's arc of personal growth intersects with a historical crisis. The junction of Martin Luther and the Reformation are often cited as an example of a man meeting a moment.

I call this intersection of one's life with a big moment as having an appointment with history. If you cover politics for more than a decade you will see history knock on politicians' doors. Most of the time, politicians are too timid to answer.



Robert Bilott — 'The lawyer who became DuPont's worst nightmare.'



Julia Marlowe

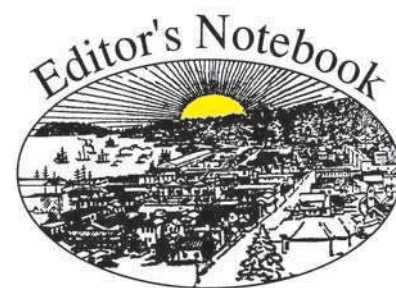
But ordinary people do respond to the call. My friend the Seattle writer tells me about a woman who left her health policy analysis career in her 50s to become a classroom teacher. When the woman retired as a first-grade teacher, her husband, a national columnist, wrote: "I am certain that Judy does more public good in a week than I've done in a lifetime. She teaches first grade."

The current issue of *Gilcrease*, the journal of the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, contains the stories of four 19th century women who were ahead of their time.

You are likely to know one of these women — Harriet Beecher Stowe — who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the book

and stage play that hastened slavery's abolition. Stowe became a global phenomenon. As Katherine Kane describes Stowe's moment of calling, it sounds like God spoke to her. "... on a wintry Sunday morning in 1851, thirty-nine-year-old wife and mother Harriet Beecher Stowe had a disturbing vision as she sat in church. She saw an enslaved man being beaten by his owner. Stowe went home, and in a burst she transcribed the scene she has seen. Then she gathered her family together to hear the story. This was the start of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*."

The names of the other three *Gilcrease* subjects are not as visible to us. They are the actress Julia Marlowe,



A woman left health policy analysis in her fifties to become a classroom teacher.

sculptor Constance Whitney Warren and the painter, memoirist and "Grande Dame of the Cherokees," Narcissa Chisholm Owen.

Julia Marlowe's story resonates with us in 2016, because she achieved a measure of stage fame just as women were becoming actresses. She brought to her theatrical experience something we seldom hear from today's actors. She believed that her art had the power to elevate and heal. When she and her partner, Edward Sothorn, performed Shakespeare in 1920 Washington, D.C., "segregation prohibited African Americans from attending any of their performances." So they spoke and performed at Howard University and Dunbar High School. Writes Kimberly Roblin: "The message was clear: Art is for everyone, and if you cannot come to us, we will come to you."

Writes Roblin: "For Julia, art was an equalizer and an elevator. It was also a calling."

I had the good fortune this week to visit lover lunch with Greg and Jeff Newenhof, proprietors of City Lumber. The Flavel home, which Greg has acquired, was a big topic. The brothers showed my advertising director and me the inside of the house.

There are a number of ways to look at the challenge that Greg faces. But it occurred to me that, like the others I've mentioned above, purpose has found him. This historic home's restoration is Greg's calling. Astoria is the beneficiary.

From watching my late grandmother, I've known that finding purpose is the key to a healthy old age. I've known my share of prosperous people who were bored with their existence. A purpose-driven life is the best human value.

—S.A.F.

Open forum

Good deeds

I, too, have been the recipient of gracious "paying it forward" — twice. Once at the "used bread store," where they don't accept checks and I had no cash. That time I caught the last name of the kind person. She was the only "Smith" in the phone book, and I quickly sent her recompense, with a little extra added for her next paying it forward good deed.

The second was more difficult, as a very nice gentleman found me a particularly pretty plant, like the one I admired in his cart — but it was hiding behind larger ones. When I got to the cashier, because of that plant, I was \$20 short in pocket.

Before I could ask to set it aside, another lovely lady stepped forward with a \$20 bill, and wouldn't give her name. I'd heard her say she was from across the river, so I asked her if she knew Diantha, which is the unusual name of a librarian in Pacific County. She admitted she did, so I was sure I had her number.

I immediately sent Diantha a note describing last summer's lady from the plant room in Fred Meyer, included a \$20 bill, and asked that

it be returned. Diantha hasn't seen her since. So a lonely bill is waiting in the bottom of a purse for a benevolent woman to use in continuing her good deed activities.

And, speaking of good deeds, aren't we all proud of the Methodist Church and its Warming Center, as well as the Presbyterian Church for continuing its quartering of the food bank.

One final word. Don't forget to vote for Trump — twice. That's my good deed for the day.

PAT MILLER
Astoria

Community mission

2016 marks the 30th year of the Astoria Rescue Mission. With virtually no government funding, the Mission has provided lodging on more than 100,000 nights and fed more than 300,000 meals. Financial contributions, as well as donations of goods and services, have made it possible.

Shower facilities, clothing, personal care items, transportation and laundry services are

routinely provided on a daily basis. The Mission is not a "flop house," not a "wino hang-out," not a "shooting gallery" for drug addicts.

The Mission provides a family atmosphere to all who are willing to participate in the ARM community, whether for only one night — or to participate in the life changing program. Numerous lives have been saved.

Health has been regained. Addictions have been overcome. Families have been reunited. Lives have been changed. Job skills are provided. Continuing education assistance is available.

Many individuals have become productive contributors to their communities. Some have become managers and owners of businesses. Success stories have included a NFL football player, an attorney, contractors, business owners and many from other walks of life.

The Women's Mission (House of Hope) was founded to receive jail inmates, discharged after midnight, many with no safe place to go. Alone, in the dark, with no resources, they were vulnerable to the elements — and the environment which put them behind bars. As a

result, compassionate ladies in our community raised the funds for 70 W. Bond St. to become a haven for women in need of a family and a home.

In times of insufficient resources, our dedicated ARM directors have quietly forfeited financial support. They have needed to give up their rented homes and move into the Mission with their young children.

The house at 64 W. Bond St. has been donated to the Mission for a two-unit residence for homeless families. However, the structure is uninhabitable, needing removal and replacement of the roof and the complete renovation of the interior. There are not sufficient funds to perform the transformation, so ARM is relying on the compassion and generosity of our community for contributions of cash, materials and labor. Grants, donations of assets or items of value are welcome, which can be converted into cash to make the structure habitable.

A special thank you to all who have contributed to the Mission — past, present and future.

JIM RAY
Board president, Astoria Rescue Mission



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