

Doug Fir invites readers to 'Like My Hike'

By DAN HAAG

They say to write what you know. For Tillamook author Doug Fir, that means two things: hiking the miles of trails along the North Coast and managing Type 1 diabetes.

The two experiences come together in Fir's first graphic novel "Like My Hike," a fun, imaginative tale that follows an adventurous tree — Doug-Fir — along sections of the Pacific Coast Trail.

The conifer Doug-Fir is frustrated. He's tired of being stuck in a rut, and especially tired of being stuck by multiple diabetic insulin shots day after day. Seeking an adventure — and better health — Doug-Fir decides to explore the Oregon Coast wonderland that is the Pacific Coast Trail.

Along the way, he learns the important role that regular exercise plays in managing his diabetes. He also bumps into fellow hikers, talking mountains and a Big Foot-type beast named Stomper. He also meets his true love, a beaver named Miss Beaver Tale.

Filled with puns and innuendo, "Like My Hike" tilts slightly more in the adult reading direction, and Fir calls it "PG-13 reading."

"When I first started selling my stuff on eBay, someone told me it looked like Robert Crumb's," he says. "I didn't know who he was at the time so I looked it up, but his stuff is definitely more adult than mine."

Many of author Fir's own experiences are mirrored in the book's fantastical artwork and storyline, chiefly his struggle with Type 1 diabetes. He calls it "a life-changing illness."

Fir, who grew up in Wisconsin, has been drawing and sketching since he can remember. "I really got into



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"Like My Hike" is the first graphic novel from Tillamook author Doug Fir.

drawing cars as a teenager," he says. "It was how I taught myself to draw in 3D."

He also spent hours roaming woods and trails, building forts and having all manner of outdoor adventures. Diabetes often slowed him down and even once put him on the brink of death. He quickly learned the necessity of managing a disease with no cure.

A big part of that management came when Fir moved to the Oregon Coast. An avid hiker, he began to notice a correlation between

extended hiking and lulls in his diabetes.

"Continuously hiking, I started noticing I'm having to take less shots," he says, adding that while on the trail, he focuses on a low-carb, high-protein diet to keep balanced blood sugars.

The struggle of being diabetic is something Fir hopes readers will recognize. He also hopes they realize independence is possible.

"Being a diabetic and a hiker, you need to think for yourself and look out for yourself," he says.

Fir also promotes light-weight hiking and packs as little as possible. "I just like moving fast and enjoying the hike, not really worrying about extra stuff," he says.

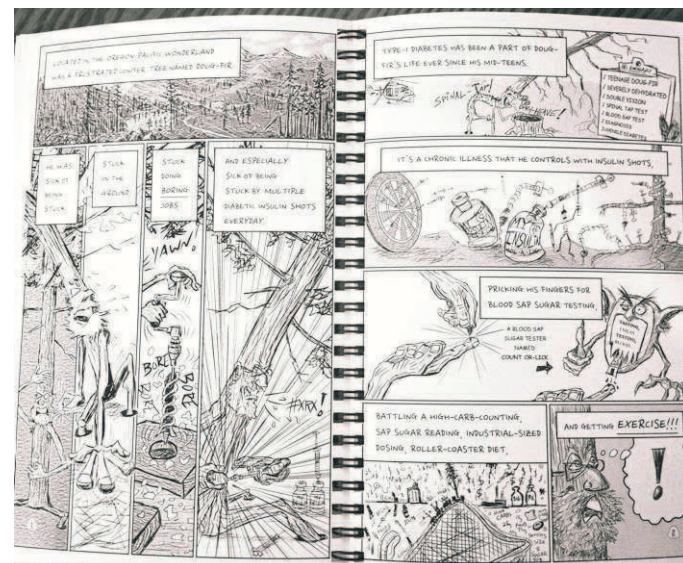
Independence has always been an important element of Fir's life and work. He created his own comic book in the early 1990s and had one of his drawings published in CARToons magazine.

"Like My Hike" was definitely a labor of love: Fir wrote, designed and illustrated the book and also self-published. His wife,



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Author Doug Fir has been busy promoting his graphic novel around Tillamook County.



Mis, served as editor. In all, the process took two years.

Fir is now in the promotion stage and has attended several book fairs and signing events around Tillamook County this fall.

"Like My Hike" is currently available at Cloud & Leaf Bookstore and News & Espresso in Manzanita. It can also be purchased online through Amazon.

As he builds inventory, Fir hopes to branch out to book sellers up and down the Oregon Coast.

Fir is even looking ahead

to ideas for his next tale, perhaps in coloring book form, featuring monsters, creatures and, of course, cars.

In the meantime, Fir intends to keep hiking. His favorite trails include the Wilson River Trail in the Tillamook State Forest and the section of the Pacific Coast Trail between Seaside and Manzanita.

Whatever he writes next, Fir knows where to look for inspiration.

"I just love Oregon, and I've always loved trees," he says.