

CONTACT US  
Jonathan Williams  
editor@coastweekend.com

# WEEKEND BREAK



FOLLOW US  
facebook.com/  
DailyAstorian



Photos by Ed Hunt

The rolling farmland of Eastern Washington signals that Pullman must be in the vicinity.

## PLUCKY PULLMAN

### Nourishing setting reigns on at Washington State University



With her interest in agriculture and 4-H experience, Lindsay Hunt found Washington State University's Pullman campus a natural choice.



The Bryan clock tower is the "freshman compass" and the iconic center of WSU in Pullman.

By ED HUNT

Approaching from the west, you emerge from the rock-scarred desert of central Washington and slowly start seeing red-barned postcard farms. Soon you're surrounded by wheat ranches with steep rolling hills of fertile soil that define the area known as the Palouse.

Alfalfa green and golden wheat, chickpeas, lentils and barley mark some of the richest farmland to be found anywhere. Invisible settlements like Lacrosse, Hooper, Windust, Dusty and Hay are noted only by green signs pointing out over the hills.

Through it all is an undulating two-lane road. On that mid-August day it is alive with a procession of cars.

Crawl up the road from Colfax on the final climb to Pullman and you realize many of these cars have Washington State University license plates — alumni like us, I suspect, returning to our alma mater. The term is Latin for "nourishing mother," for this university must have provided each of us with something, something that causes us to return now with our fresh-faced sons and daughters, entrusting them to its care.

#### School of friends

My ride at WSU was a bit of a rough one. Things weren't always smooth and perfect. But I met some of the kindest people in my life — some of my best friends.

It was at WSU that I learned that I could write — a career that carried me for a dozen successful years. I bought my first motorcycle, made some of my biggest mistakes and learned that I loved learning.

It was at WSU that I met my wife — which is the best thing that ever happened to me.

People who know me know I'm a fan of Washington State University. Not just a fan of the football team; for most of my life they have never been all that good, and I worked on game days and missed most of the home games while I was there. I'm a fan of the university and the generous camaraderie that came with attending the cow college on the far side of the state — a university that most Seattle city folks looked down upon.

Things have changed in the past 30 years.

#### Wazzu, or else?

On that long drive up to deliver my

daughter to her dorm, I wondered if it was the same welcoming place that could be trusted to nourish her mind and allow her to grow into her ambitions. I worried, too, that I emphasized WSU too much. I told the girls that even if they decide to go to college someplace else, I wouldn't mind.

Yet, with Lindsay's interest in agriculture and food science, it was hard to imagine a school better suited for her. She's visited WSU several summers now for 4-H conferences, so she is more familiar with its culture and campus than most freshman arriving this week.

I have nothing but confidence in her. Yet, I'm a dad, so I wonder and worry. My ride to WSU was a rough one.

Growing up in the tiny town of Lyle, Washington, we didn't have much in the way to help deciding which school to attend. The school guidance counselor was out after a bad car accident, so

I took it upon myself to research colleges for my classmates. As a high school senior, I organized tours of the University of Oregon, Western Washington University, University of Puget Sound and the University of Washington.

I didn't even know about WSU until the parents of one of my friends — Bill and Wendy Hamm — suggested I apply to the school

where they had met. It had a good broadcast journalism program, they said. I was already working as a DJ in high school. So without much more research than that, I submitted an application.

Years ago, the old knock against WSU is that you only went there if you couldn't get into a better school. However, I got accepted to Rutgers, Tulane and the University of Oregon. By then, however, I realized how much private and out-of-state colleges would cost to attend.

WSU was the least expensive and so I went there. I knew barely anything about WSU.

In this age of the internet, it is hard to emphasize how difficult information was to come by 30 years ago. Research amounted to reading the glossy brochures that arrived in the mail. I had to pick out my dorm based on a map and a written description.

I had never seen the Palouse before that hot summer day when I loaded up my car and drove out of the Gorge into the desert guided only by an atlas and driven by a desire to leave my little town behind.

See Pullman, Page B2