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# WEEKEND BREAK



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Nenad Stojkovic

## OFF TO COLLEGE

### Preparing for a season of change

By **DIANE LUND**  
*For The Astorian*

I knew it was inevitable, but that didn't stop me from feeling panicked. My daughter was going to college. "Mom, hurry up, what's taking you so long?" Elissa said, standing by the front door, her suitcase in hand.

She hadn't had any breakfast. "Mom, I'm not hungry. Let's go," she said. "Tinker" the dog kept licking her face as if he knew she was leaving. On her 10th birthday, Elissa had woken up to find this brown, fluffy-haired dog lying on her bed. They became constant companions.

The dog would get so excited when she came home from school, he'd jump up and down begging for a treat. A neighbor promised to take care of "Tinker" until I came back.

Dousing my coffee in the sink, I reluctantly grabbed the car keys. Two heavy boxes, containing nearly everything Elissa owned, were stored in the backseat. I took the wheel.

Neither of us spoke for the longest time. Finally, I broke the silence.

"I'm going to miss you terribly," I said. "Mom, you'll be fine. You have so many friends. Maybe you'll meet someone special." I shrugged. Those weren't the words I wanted to hear.

When we reached a viewpoint at Mount Shasta, Elissa climbed into the driver's seat. "Don't take those curves too fast," I warned her. She sped off. Tightening my seat belt, I knew it was useless to say anything. Elissa had a mind of her own, an eloquent mind like her father.

Elissa had been the center of my life since the day she was born. I adored her. Every time she did something new, like learning to tie her tennis shoes, I'd buy something special, a book or a doll.

I was astounded to see her overalls covered with paint after I picked her from preschool at the Jewish Community Center. I asked her teacher what happened. Elissa had gotten so excited drawing me a picture, she hadn't noticed the smudges on her clothes.

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