

KISS guitarist celebrates degree, Cannon Beach

Pacific University held its 2018 spring commencement exercises on Saturday, May 19, highlighted by an honorary degree conferral on university trustee and KISS guitarist Tommy Thayer doctorate of humane letters degree for his philanthropic leadership efforts. Tommy and his father, Brigadier General James B. Thayer, are the second members from a same family to hold honorary degrees from the university.

Thayer grew up in Beaverton and graduated from Sunset High School in 1978. After forming the hard-rock band Black 'n Blue and relocating to southern California in the early 1980s, Thayer joined KISS as a producer, songwriter and business manager before becoming the band's lead guitarist in February 2003.

Q: Honored to be speaking with you, Tommy. How did you get involved with Pacific University?

Thayer: Dad made the board suggestion and they ran with that. They thought that would be great — Tommy Thayer, a local boy, with the profile of being in KISS — an interesting combination of background and experience.

Q: Are you a college graduate?

Thayer: No, I did not go to college. I was straight out of high school and into "rock 'n' roll 101." I'd had a few bands, but ended up forming a band called Black 'n Blue in 1981. It was five guys from the Portland area.

We played clubs for a certain amount of time, but then decided if we ever wanted a chance of really making it, we needed to get out of Portland and head to Los Angeles where there were record labels and management companies.

We took a shot at the big time in early 1983. We moved and within six months we were signed with a major label — Geffen Records — and put together a real nice recording contract. Then we were on our way.

Q: Those were the glory days of heavy metal.

Thayer: The new wave of British heavy metal was happening at the time: (Iron) Maiden, (Judas) Priest, Def Leppard — these bands were coming up out of England, and making a real splash so that

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



kind of carried over into the U.S.

Ironically, one of the early tours we did was opening for KISS in 1985, and that is when I met (singer-songwriter) Gene Simmons and (bass player) Paul Stanley.

Q: Tell me about your time with KISS.

Thayer: KISS's first record came out in 1974. And they have been plugging right along ever since, I should say "we" now because I've been with them for the last 15 years.

Black 'n Blue was the opening act for KISS on a tour in 1985 and that's when I met those guys. When Black 'n Blue ran its course in the early '90s, Gene and Paul asked me to come aboard with the KISS organization behind the scenes.

I did everything from getting the coffee to directing and producing documentary videos. Then they did a reunion tour in '96, and I became the road manager. A couple years went by and they had problems with their lead guitar player. They decided to make a change in 2002 and I was the heir apparent.

Q: Has it been a smooth transition?

Thayer: Absolutely. It's like a five-way marriage in a lot of ways. The key, really, is being with people who are professional, can get along, support each other, and respect each other. It just doesn't happen a lot of times.

People always ask, "What happened with this or that?" "Why did this guy leave?" "Why do they hate each other?" It really comes down to personality issues.

We've been able to circumvent that and make it work, Gene, Paul, (drummer) Eric (Carr) and I all get along famously. We actually enjoy being together when we tour. We love hanging out, having dinner and sharing time together. It's a huge plus.

Q: Where do you live now?

Thayer: My primary residence is in Southern California. I live about 45 minutes outside of Los Angeles in Thousand Oaks.

Q: What is your experience on the Oregon Coast?



TOMMYTHAYER.COM

KISS guitarist Tommy Thayer.

Thayer: I grew up in Beaverton. Cannon Beach is a big part of my life and my background.

Q: In what way?

Thayer: My dad, the general, grew up in a small town called Carlton, Oregon. His parents and his grandparents, took him to Seaside, Cannon Beach, back in the '20s, when he was just a young kid.

When we were growing up, we were in Cannon Beach all the time.

Ten years ago I built a house in Cannon Beach on Jefferson Street in Midtown. I sold it just a year or two ago. It didn't make sense for me to continue it because I just wasn't getting there enough, so I actually sold the place.

Two of my brothers, Mike and John, have homes there. To me, it is one of the most special places in the world. It's so beautiful and unique, and I love being there.

Q: Do you get recognized?

Thayer: Sometimes, if people don't immediately know I'm in KISS, they have to suspect I'm someone in rock 'n' roll. People



PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

Pacific University trustee Tommy Thayer.

are pretty cool. Over the years I've really gotten to know people there and everybody is so nice and friendly, but they let me have my privacy and do my thing as well.

When I go into the Driftwood in Cannon Beach, my favorite spot, it's kind of like old home week to see all your friends and all the locals.

Q: Bringing this full circle to your honorary degree — what do you say to kids who say he didn't go to school and now you're promoting education at Pacific University. What are you trying to impart to a new generation?

Thayer: For me, I had the opportunity to go to music and it worked. Whether you're in school or pursuing a career, perseverance is the key to success.

Q: Do you have a family?

Thayer: I was married, got divorced a couple of years ago, I'm kind of just doing my thing, enjoying life and going down the rock 'n' roll road and doing well.

Q: Do you have plans to come back to Cannon Beach?

Thayer: I hope so. I would love to be there for the Fourth of July, but KISS is going to Europe, to headline festivals in Spain and Portugal, so I won't have an opportunity to be there

Q: When do you hit the road?

Thayer: We start in Barcelona, Spain, on July 7.

The discreet joys of a lazy weekend

I was on our front patio, comfortably set back from the street, drinking coffee, reading the paper, idly texting with a friend back east. It was 8:30 on a sunny Sunday morning. In a little while I'd get dressed and we'd get in the car and head over to Sea Level Bakery in Tolovana Park for a cappuccino and a cookie and nab a baguette for later.

I wasn't intending to write about this, but I've devised entire meals around Sea Level bread. Both the baguette and the bâtard stand up well to marinara sauce should

you decide to go Italian; I've made open face sandwiches with roasted tomatoes, arugula, and buffalo mozzarella. We've eaten it very simply, slathered with good butter. My husband likes dipping it into a small bowl of olive oil. Even if you don't get around to eating it until the next day, it freshens up nicely popped into a 350-degree oven for three minutes, sprinkled first with a little water.

Meanwhile, I was enjoying the morning out front in my bathrobe.

Let me say I have a very nice bathrobe. It's pink and made by the company called Natori. I got it a year ago and it's been washed a fair amount and soon I should probably think about replacing it, but not yet. It's not stained and no threads are hanging off. It does a great job masquerading as a light overcoat when I want to sit out on a summer morning while still in my pajamas.

Some people are very energetic Sunday mornings. They burst out of bed and take off for a run on the beach or 90 minutes of yoga at Cannon Beach Yoga Arts. People on vacation like to take advantage of the fact they can amble over to the Wayfarer or the Driftwood and have a Bloody Mary with their breakfast, or, better yet, as their breakfast. Me, I like to come to life slowly, coffee in hand. I make the first cup at home in Seaside,



R.J. MARX

Is there any other way to get around Cannon Beach? One of many sights you'll see as you take in the streetscapes.

grinding my own beans, using a French press. I like to engage my spouse in meaningful conversation since it's the only day of the week at least one of us isn't rushing out. If the weather is cooperative, we like to take this talk outside.

We could sit out back, which is 100 percent more private. We finally got around to having a backyard table and chairs. But somehow the streetscape is more alluring. People are walking by. There are families in surreys. One day I saw a guy riding a bike towing a surfboard. What with the parade of dogs, children, hot rods and people in funny hats, there's a remarkable Dr. Seuss "To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street" vibe

going on streetside.

Which I prefer to take in wearing a bathrobe. Not long ago I realized I have become that woman who talks to people over the fence. For most of my life, this has been a derisive image. But something's shifted. Mostly I talk to my next door neighbor when she passes by with her pup. The other day I talked to a woman exercising her twin pugs. Sometimes while I'm out there, I do a bit of weeding.

I'm proud to say I've grown into a time in my life where it's no biggie to face the world wearing a bathrobe.

I call that progress.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



you decide to go Italian; I've made open face sandwiches with roasted tomatoes, arugula, and buffalo mozzarella. We've eaten it very simply, slathered with good butter. My husband likes dipping it into a small bowl of olive oil. Even if you don't get around to eating it until the next day, it freshens up nicely popped into a 350-degree oven for three minutes, sprinkled first with a little water.

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PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY, July 3
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

MONDAY, July 9
Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., 188 Sunset, Cannon Beach.

TUESDAY, July 10
Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

MONDAY, July 16
Ecola Creek Watershed Committee, 4:30 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

TUESDAY, July 17
Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

THURSDAY, July 19
Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Cannon Beach Design Review Board Meeting, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

THURSDAY, July 26
Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

TUESDAY, Aug. 7
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

MONDAY, Aug. 13
Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., 188 Sunset, Cannon Beach.

TUESDAY, Aug. 14
Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

THURSDAY, Aug. 16
Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Cannon Beach Design Review Board Meeting, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.