

# Special moments only happen once

I remember Camp Pine Valley because it was the site of my first kiss, delivered by a sweet nerdy guy named Frank.

He was 12. I was 11 but working hard to look older.

Frank was a skinny guy who wore thick glasses. His real name was Franklin, but at that time in his life he preferred Frank. We both longed to be reading books instead of choosing up ball game teams, but books were in short supply at Camp Pine Valley. He was not interested in sports, which endeared him to me. I could swim and paddle a canoe, but I couldn't catch or throw a ball or run fast, which guaranteed that I would be chosen last in the frequent team selections endemic to summer camp.

Most of summer camp for me was about these daily rejections and other athletic failures, like my first horseback riding experience when the horse lay down and tried to wipe me off its back. But amidst these juvenile humiliations, Frank picked me to experience a first kiss, his as well as mine.

I recall that he held my hand at campfire sing-a-longs. I felt loved. Suddenly I was not all alone anymore. That was special. That was very special indeed.

After the eight-week summer camp session ended, we campers left the woods and hills of the Laurentian Mountains and returned to Montreal where most of us lived. Frank and I "dated" a bit after camp, although "dating" is a big word for what we did. We had absolutely no private time together.

A date with Frank meant his father drove him to my house. Frank and I would climb into the back seat of his dad's big sedan and hold hands, while both his parents sat in the front. Then we would all drive to see a movie.

This in itself was exciting: not because Frank was holding my damp hand in his, but because it was illegal for anyone under 16 years of age to attend most movies in the puritanical Quebec Province of 1957. His nice parents would attend the movie with us to bolster the lie about our ages as we bought our entry tickets.

I have no recollection of what movies we saw, but I recall several of these dates. Best of all, I could now brag that I had a boyfriend, which vastly improved my social status. Frank was definitely a good thing in my life in the autumn of 1957.

A few months later, our little romance came to an abrupt end when my father took a new job — in Iowa. In 1958 our nuclear family did what no one in Montreal's close-knit community ever did back then: We moved more than 1,000 miles away from Montreal and all our relatives.

I recall a few letters back and forth between Frank and me, but soon the intervals between them lengthened until the correspondence stopped. Kids our age had no access to expensive long-distance phone calls. Letters written on paper and ink took a long time to arrive. I got busy adjusting to my American high school and I never saw Frank again.

Or did I? Flash forward to April 2021. I am living in Portland, Oregon. This is my 11th city since leaving Montreal in 1958, but I have been here 40 years. I moved here in 1980 from city number 10, which was Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I have a career and a life. Camp Pine Valley is a distant memory; I have to do research to even recall its name.

I'm still in touch with a couple of people who live in Pittsburgh. One is a professor at Carnegie-Mellon University. My friend contacts me when there's news about someone we both knew back in the 1970s. Last April, my professor friend sent me an obituary from a Pittsburgh newspaper. On the same day, I received a second copy of the same obituary, from someone else in Pittsburgh whom I had not seen in decades.

The subject of the obituary was a well-known professor of the history of art and architecture in

Pittsburgh. He had degrees from McGill, Oberlin and Harvard. He had published nine books in his field, many of which recorded his findings from excavations of famous cathedral sites in Italy. He had won a Guggenheim Fellowship among other prestigious prizes. He was internationally famous for his writings on architectural and cultural history. His name was Franklin.

There was nothing in the obituaries about his attendance at Camp Pine Valley, but this was definitely Franklin of the first-ever kiss.

By some trick of memory, I do not recall meeting Frank when we both lived in Pittsburgh in the 1970s. Frank was then a young professor at Carnegie-Mellon University. He was married; I was newly single after a painful divorce. Somehow, 40 years after I left Pittsburgh permanently, both of my friends from the '70s who sent me his obituary retained the memory that I knew Franklin.

Maybe Franklin's name came up when I lived there. Maybe we met, disliked each other and I deleted the meeting from memory. Maybe I met him and told other friends who taught at Carnegie-Mellon about him. Maybe he never forgave me for dropping our teenage correspondence. Any of these scenarios is plausible; I just don't recall.

Thinking about Camp Pine Valley after all these years reminds me that the camp put on a production of "The Wizard of Oz." I was cast as the Tin Man. My solo song was "If I only had a heart." I hold Franklin's memory dear because his kiss awakened my young heart. That only happens once.

## ANYONE CAN WRITE

Nearly 40 years in the business have taught me that readers long for meaning and a connection at a deeper and more universal level.

And that's why the Hermiston Herald will be running, from time to time, stories from students who are in my writing class, which I've been teaching for the past 10 years in Portland.

I take great satisfaction in helping so-called nonwriters find and write stories from their lives and experiences. They walk into my room believing they don't have what it takes to be a writer. I remind them if they follow their hearts, they will discover they are storytellers.

As we all are at our core.

Some of these stories have nothing to do with Hermiston or Umatilla County. They do, however, have everything to do with life.

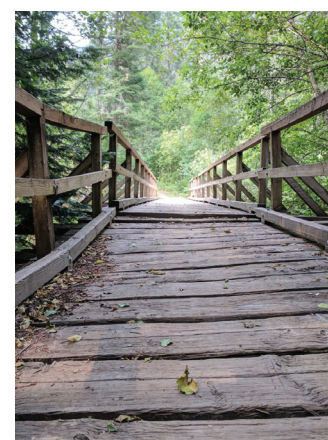
If you are interested in contacting me to tell me your story, I'd like to hear from you.

**Tom Hallman Jr., [tbhbook@aol.com](mailto:tbhbook@aol.com)**

*Tom Hallman Jr. is a Pulitzer Prize-winning feature writer for the Oregonian newspaper. He's also a writing coach and has an affinity for Umatilla County.*

# Work begins on Blue Mountain Scenic Byway

HERMISTON HERALD



U.S. Forest Service/Contributed Photo

Contractors have begun prep work to chip seal 33.6 miles of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway on the North Fork John Day Ranger District. This project is one of two projects on the Umatilla National Forest that was funded this year through the Great American Outdoors Act.

Work will be ongoing for approximately four weeks and includes cleaning the road surface, sealing cracks in the road and patching potholes, according to a press release from the Umatilla National Forest. Contractors then will chip seal the entire road. Construction crews are moving equipment on-site this week and stockpiling gravel. The chip seal is anticipated to begin Monday, Aug. 16.

The construction work will require periodic delays along the full length of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway with flaggers and pilot cars managing traffic from Aug. 16 until approximately Aug. 30. The road will reopen once work is complete. Construction signs will be posted at each end of the project and as needed in work zones.

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway is a popular 145-mile route that travels from near Arlington to Granite. This road also is a major portal to the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests, offering opportunities for scenic views and recreation.

"The deferred maintenance on this portion of the road will reduce risk to public safety and extend the life of this scenic route for 10-20 years," according to the Umatilla National Forest.

This project is part of the investment of up to \$40 million in 2021 for 29 projects on national forests in Oregon and Washington through the Great American Outdoors Act, intended to address critical deferred maintenance and improve transportation and recreation infrastructure. Nationally, the funds will allow the

**U.S. Forest Service staff in 2013 discovered the Burnt Cabin Creek Trail Bridge was deteriorating in the Umatilla National Forest's Walla Walla Ranger District. The forest is receiving funds to replace the bridge.**

Forest Service to implement more than 500 infrastructure improvement projects essential to the continued use and enjoyment of national forests lands this year.

In addition to the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway chip seal project, the Umatilla National Forest received funding to replace the Burnt Cabin Trail Bridge on the Walla Walla Ranger District. Implementing both projects this year will provide safe and enhanced visitor access through these areas of the Umatilla National Forest. The projects also will support local employment opportunities and strengthen shared stewardship of national forests and grasslands by expanding the Forest Service work with public and private partners.

Additional projects may be implemented on the Umatilla National Forest and will be announced as funding is allocated. The forest also will continue to share updates on these GAOA projects as construction begins.

For more information on these projects in the Pacific Northwest Region, visit the regional GAOA website.

Additional information about the Umatilla National Forest is available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla>.

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