

# LOCAL

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR

## The haiku of a chance meeting

Distillation of ordinary thoughts yields extraordinary clarity — and feels good

I was sitting in one of my favorite Ashland coffee shops, sipping my mocha and writing on a lined, yellow legal pad.

A man sitting in a chair across from me asked, "Are you writing poetry?" He had long, white hair, thick glasses. An Alan Ginsberg-type.

I looked up and shook my head. "Nothing so grand as that." I held up my pad for him to see. "Just a To Do list." He looked a little embarrassed, which he needn't have. I went back to my list. Go. Email. Do. Call. Then I had a thought.

"What's the tempo again for haiku?" I asked, suddenly.

"Five-seven-five, 17," he said, without missing a beat. "Well," he went on, shrugging his shoulders and warming to the subject, "that's the traditional. Though there's a movement to change it to 14, but ...."

"Thanks," I said, "I'd forgotten."

"Do you want to hear a haiku I wrote the other morning?" he asked.

Well, this was more



SUSANNE SEVEREID

interesting than adding "buy light bulbs" to my list. "Sure," I said.

He leaned back in his chair, eyes closed, and began reciting a few phrases about greeting the day, opening one's eyes, being alive. It was pure, real, true. I told him so.

Then, almost like a confession, I said, "Actually, it's not *my* to-Do list. It's a list of chores I'm making for my son."

"Ah," he said and smiled.

I looked down at the page of edicts I had been busy compiling. "But I think I'll just write him a haiku instead," I said. My perception had changed from linear columns of "must do's" and chores and errands to images, shapes. To something else.

I played with it for awhile, scribbling and crossing out words, counting on my fingers. I closed my eyes, too, and leaned back and I imagined what I wanted my son to do. I saw him raking the leaves into a big pile in the yard in my mind's eye and fluffing up sheets high in the air as he made his bed. Rather than detailing every command in a stern voice, I found myself distilling what I, as his mother, wanted to say in only 17 syllables.

"I've got it," I said after some minutes.

The man looked up.

"Do you want to hear it?"

He nodded, and I read it to him. He looked pleased and, after a bit more chatting, we each finished our coffee and went our separate ways.

When my son and a friend came home from school that afternoon, I told him I'd made a haiku as his list. They laughed and looked at me as if I'd gone nuts.

"Seriously, there's your list," I said, pointing to a piece of paper on the counter. "I wrote

you a haiku."

"Okay," he said hesitantly.

They both listened as I read it aloud.

*Fall leaves on the ground  
Grateful for a room to clean  
Kind in word and deed*

"Well, he's already flunked out on the last one," joked his buddy. "But, dude, I think your mom wants you to clean your room."

"Yeah, and I was planning to pick up the leaves," said my son as he pulled on some gardening gloves. They went outside, jabbing and shoving each other as teenagers do. I watched them raking the leaves through the window, and I felt content.

And I thought of another haiku.

*A cup of coffee,  
A place, a chance encounter  
A new way to see.*

*Author, speaker and performer Susanne Severeid lives in Ashland. For more, go to [www.susannesevereid.com](http://www.susannesevereid.com). The Daily Tidings will begin running a daily haiku in the near future; check the comics page for its appearance and send in your haiku.*

### POLICE REPORTS

**Friday, 8:51 a.m.** — A woman reported her specialized mountain bike stolen in the 400 block of Siskiyou Boulevard.

**Friday, 11:49 a.m.** — Property was found in the first block of Lincoln Street.

**Friday, 12:30 p.m.** — Oberon's Tavern reported a burglary attempt in the first block of North Main Street.

**Friday, 4:16 p.m.** — A 24-year-old man was cited on a charge of not wearing a helmet while skateboarding in the 200 block of Water Street.

**Friday, 4:49 p.m.** — A 42-year-old man was cited and released on a charge of possession of methamphetamine in the first block of Mistletoe Road.

**Friday, 5:32 p.m.** — A phone-based fraud was reported in the 600 block of Liberty Street.

**Friday, 11:14 p.m.** — A 37-year-old man was arrested on an Arizona parole violation on an original charge of robbery in the area of Tolman Creek Road and Chapman Lane. He was additionally cited on charges of open container of alcohol and possession of marijuana.

**Saturday, 12:42 a.m.** — Police investigated a drug possession case in the 400 block of Wightman Street.

**Sunday, 2:56 a.m.** — A 27-year-old man was arrested on a charge of DUII-alcohol in the 400 block of Lithia Way.

**Sunday, 2:45 p.m.** — A bike was reported stolen in the first block of North Main Street.

**Sunday, 9:25 p.m.** — A 32-year-old man was arrested on a charge of violating a restraining order in the 800 block of Hillview Drive. He was lodged at jail.

— Daily Tidings staff report

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### COMING IN PRINT

The Distributive Education Club of America program for young entrepreneurs, revived after a 10-year hiatus, performed well at a recent competition. **Coming Wednesday.**

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