

Life's good little surprises

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Life is funny. Do you ever think about where your life path has brought you?

I can't help but sit back and laugh sometimes about where I am right now. The irony of it all is nothing short of amusing.

I grew up in the nursery industry. My parents (and, at the time, my grandparents) owned **Simnitt Nursery** in Canby, Oregon. I grew up going to the Clackamas Chapter Christmas Party, meeting all my parents' friends at other Oregon Association of Nurseries get-togethers, and loving the Farwest Show because I would get to go out to "fancy" dinners.

But my work at the nursery itself was sparse. I occasionally had time to help transplant and run deliveries, but most of my extra time was spent in a ballet studio. I grew up having complete admiration and appreciation for our nursery and the industry itself, but never saw myself being a part of it in the future.

I then met my now-husband, Wayne. His passion for plants started at a very young age and had nothing to do with me or my family. Of course, it helped that my dad and he had similar interests, but his shared passion for plants was just one of his many great qualities.

He started his nursery before we were married, and I had my own career at that point. I was dancing professionally and had started a Pilates studio, so plants were far from my mind. While discussing our future together, we knew that we would both be supportive of one another's businesses, but we each had our own focus.

As his nursery grew, I saw myself helping a little more each year. Moving pipe, running errands for supplies, cleaning scion wood, planting ... each time the nursery grew, so did my involvement. Within the first 10 years of **Columbia Nursery**, we moved the nursery from a 2-acre rented parcel to our first property, and then to our larger location where we are now, just south of Canby.

My professional ballet career had ended, but my Pilates studio was still my main focus. The Clackamas Chapter needed some help planning their annual Christmas party, so I volunteered to assist them. That became the beginning of my



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OAN involvement. Oh, little did I know.

I was soon a permanent member of the chapter board, and then made my way through the OAN Board of Directors before I was asked to be on the Executive Committee. During that time, I also served on the chapter revitalization and revenue task forces. Wayne's nursery also began to grow more quickly. It needed a full-time office presence. I split my time between teaching Pilates and ballet, and the nursery as best as I could while also raising our three kids. Covid actually made planning my life a little easier, as it forced me to focus 100% on our nursery and the kids.

The shift into working at the nursery full time was so gradual that I almost didn't see it happening. It wasn't until my youngest got mad at his dad while he was pruning some maples and said, "Stop, Dad! You're hurting Mom's trees!" that we both realized the kids saw the nursery not only as Dad's anymore. It had turned into my passion and focus as well, and was now our one mutual dream.

So, when asked if I would have seen myself following my father's footsteps, I would have absolutely said no. But now, I look and think to myself, why not? It all makes sense now. The two most important men in my life have inspired me to be a part of this organization, and I feel incredibly lucky to not only be a part of it, but to raise our children with this extraordinary community.

Who would have thought I would be here now? Life truly does have a way of making you look back and laugh. ☺

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