

Stranger on the Street Interview and Profile Piece

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Astoria is a quiet, sleepy town on the coast of Oregon, most famous for being the filmmaking location of the classic film *The Goonies*. For 44-year-old Carrie, though, it is just one more town she's passing through on a journey around the country to make peace with the passing of her son, Jordan.

"My youngest son died a year and a half ago and um...it's been hard. I mean, I haven't really dealt with it." She pauses for a moment before continuing. "This is kind of my outlet."

She says she still thinks of Jordan every day.

"He was very artistic. He loved people. He would do anything for anybody," she said. "That was kind of his downfall. He had a hard time finding his place, and he just chose the wrong path. He was a good, kind-hearted person. He just had a hard time fitting in."

"He loved to do things with his hands," she said. "I really like dragonflies, and he made me a bunch of dragonflies out of old copper wire. He would strip the wire out of old copper stuff and twist it and make little designs. I have a tree of life. Well, I have one and then my older son has one, hanging off the mirror in the van."

I met Carrie while she was taking her two dogs for an afternoon walk along the waterfront in Astoria. She has been on the road living out of her camper van for three months. Her journey began all the way in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where her older son, Jake, was living before he started a job in Alaska for the summer.

The road trip may end in August when Jake returns from Alaska, but for now, Carrie said she doesn't have any final destination in mind.

She is a small, thin woman, with short brown hair and a kind face that lights up when she talks about her two sons. Jake is almost twenty-six and a certified yoga instructor and massage therapist.

"He's my inspiration in life. He is very into sustainability," she said. "Very minimalist. That's why we have the camper van. It's kind of his baby. He just let me use it while he's gone and then we'll see where we go from there."

Her parents were musicians, so she spent much of her childhood travelling with them and did more road tripping on her own when she was in her twenties. On this trip, the most challenging part for her has been realizing how much the country has changed since she was last on the road. It's not as easy as it once was to drift from one spot to another.

“When I was 24, you could go camp wherever you wanted. It didn’t matter, you know? Even at campgrounds, most of them were free or very cheap. They had limited stuff, but we didn’t care,” she said. “That was what the point of it was. It wasn’t to go stay somewhere where you have all of the amenities, it was to go find a wild spot, you know?”

After a few days in Astoria, Carrie will continue on in search of more of these wild spots, with her two dogs and dozens of her son’s copper dragonflies keeping her company along the way.