

Bend Up Close: Molly Hendrickson

by K_Guice

A Newsmaker on Media and Life in Bend

As a young child, Molly Hendrickson used to pretend that she was a news reporter and talk show host with her brother and sister. Fast forward two decades and now she is the real deal on KTVZ NewsChannel 21.

Molly Hendrickson

Hendrickson, a Bend native, said despite those early childhood play days, growing up she struggled with the direction of her career. "I actually first went to OSU and wasn't sure of what I wanted to do so I majored in communications," she said. "I was a little bit lost."

During a bout of soul searching she thought back to what she really enjoyed and the days of playing with her brother and sister. Hendrickson said, "I thought, that is something I really want to do."

So, she decided to transfer to the University of Oregon and major in journalism. "I just fell in love with it," she recalls. Interning during the summer a couple of years ago solidified her decision. "I got my hands on a camera and started interviewing people," she said. "During my internship I discovered I really love knowing what is going on and being the first to know."

However, Hendrickson said the road was shaky at times, literally. She started as a part-time reporter. “I remember doing my first live shot and being terrified” she said.

That performance did not compare to her first on-air moment after landing a weekend weather position. “I figured how hard could be not realizing how much my nerves were going to get in the way,” she said with a grimace.

“My first time doing weather my whole body was shaking. My legs were shaking. My voice was shaking,” she said. “It was horrible, really terrible,” she laughed.

People came up to her after the memorable performance and tried to comfort her. As bad as it was, Hendrickson said she did not let it daunt her.

“I have always been really driven,” she said. Plus, her news director was supportive. He encouraged her to find her comfort zone. “He said maybe next time you can stand off camera and voice the weather report until you get comfortable on camera,” she recalled.

Hendrickson believes those early days were helpful, “I think it is good when things don’t come easy to you,” she said. “It makes you work harder for them.”

She has never been one to shun away from hard work. Growing up in Bend, Hendrickson worked hard and played hard. She attended Mountain View High School and did gymnastics for 12 years before she blew out her knee in high school. “That was a big part of my life until I got hurt.”

Those years competing in gymnastics may have been the foundation for what makes her such a passionate journalist today. Hendrickson says her job is not only rewarding it is a real thrill.

For example, the feeling she gets when she hears about a really good story. “I get a total rush of excitement and then the possibilities of all of these ideas and how I am going to do the story. I love the process: getting a scoop or lead, being the first to know, getting the interview and figuring out how to put it all together.”

Ultimately, she enjoys story telling and sharing what is going on in the world. “There is so much news out there,” Hendrickson said. “We really shape what our community focuses on by the stories we choose.”

Having an educated community is essential, according to Hendrickson and she likes having a helping hand in the very community that helped to raise her.

“I loved Bend because it was such a small community,” she said. As she grew up, she watched the town grow out but was shocked when she returned home from college one summer to find that she didn’t know her hometown anymore.

“I came home from college and I would get lost in my own town,” she said. “When they put in the parkway it made things very, very different.”

What is not different is the people. “When I went to college, I remember walking down the street and smiling at people and they didn’t smile back,” she recalled. “It was a really foreign because everyone here is so friendly. People really do care here, it’s nice.”

She also enjoys the outdoor recreation that Bend offers. “One of my most favorite things we used to do,” Hendrickson said. “I have two girlfriends I’ve been best friends with for years. We would go to a place called white rock and jump off of the cliffs into the river.”

She doesn’t advise that anyone else try that. “I think that may be illegal now,” she joked. After a

pause, she realized it may not have even been legal back then.

As she reminisces about Bend and her past, she shares memories of The Emporium being a cool place to shop and Goodies being a cool hang out. "The west side was just trees," she said. "There are buildings everywhere now."

While part of her misses the small town she thinks good can come from the big boom in Bend. "It's kind of sad to see how expensive the land and the homes have gotten, but part of me would like to see more diversity."

She adds, "I can't blame them it's a great place to live. People fall in love with this town." The one thing she hopes that doesn't change is the people. "I hope as it grows, it keeps the same friendly feeling."

That feeling, her family and fianc , Levi are the very things that brought her back to Bend. "This is my first market after college," she said. "My fianc  is from here as well and works for his family business. He was moving back here so it just worked out."

She said having her loved ones in the same town where she was getting her feet wet on air made the process a little easier. "I think that it's nice to have the support of your family around when you're diving into the world."

"My parents are great! they have always been my support," Hendrickson said. "I think they are a little bit proud and like getting to see what I'm doing." Laughing she said, "They wake up and there I am saying good morning to them."

As for Hendrickson's future? On the personal front, her short term goals are to finalize her wedding plans to Levi. The two have been dating four years and like her parents, he has been amazing. "He's been my rock through all of this," she said. The two plan to tie the knot on September 2, once they figure out how to accommodate the ever-growing list of Bend family and friends.

Looking towards the future career goals, much like she struggled in the past, it is a question she is now battling. "I would really like to see how far I can get in my career," she said. "I would love to work in a larger market like San Francisco or Portland and maybe comeback later."

No matter where she goes or what she does she said, "My goals are to continue to grow as a reporter, tell better stories, continue growing as an anchor and see where I can take myself in this career."

"I don't really see an end in sight," she said. "No matter where I go, I am always going to strive to be better. It is hard work but it is really rewarding."

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