

Lola Rose Speaks of Lake Oswego in 2050

By Laurie N. Lee

“Mom, why do we live in Lake Oswego? I hear about other nice cities; is ours the best?”

“Well,” responded Lola Rose, “I truly believe it is the best city in Oregon because of our community’s passion for sustainability. In 2016 when I was in school, our teachers talked about climate change and what we could do to help our environment. I learned about the city’s partnership with the Sustainability Network for important projects, including LED lighting and green building practices. Much has happened since then to set us apart from other cities.

“At that time, we were all committed to recycling our waste, and L.O. was getting started with composting food waste. Over time, there were more and more things we could recycle, so now we hardly need to throw anything away. By recycling, we are helping our climate and reducing toxic landfills.

“One thing that makes your dad and me happy here is that our neighborhood is so friendly and everyone helps each other. Lake Oswego is full of these neighborhood groups. In 2012 my grandparents moved to Tanglewood Drive, and there were gatherings all the time. A few years later, people became concerned about a possible massive earthquake off our Oregon coast that would devastate the city and region, potentially within fifty years. Fortunately that has not happened yet! The city has hosted workshops and encouraged close neighbors to have meetings to plan for how to survive well “when the big one comes.” Now your dad and I continue with neighborhood meetings and we have lots of emergency supplies. Our terrific neighbors have many different skills, so we’re all confident that we’ll do fine if there is disruption with our roads, utilities, and food supplies.

“So I don’t want to scare you about earthquakes – We will be safe. In fact, this evening we should go through our emergency drill again that the City designed. We all have cell phones that we can charge without electricity, so we can connect with each other and with the city emergency communications department. We have our own water tanks, and our house is earthquake proof. And for the past 35 years the city has done everything possible to strengthen the infrastructure and develop redundant systems so that services can be restored quickly in the event of any natural disaster.”

“That’s really a relief, Mom. So what else makes Lake Oswego livable and sustainable, and how else are we addressing climate change?”

“L.O. provides incentives for solar and wind-powered energy and cars, so we don’t use dirty fuels and rely on foreign countries for our heat and power. And we don’t even have to own a car, since our inexpensive regional public and private transportation systems allow us to travel anywhere we want in the area.

“That’s cool Mom. I love to ride my bike, since we have so many bike paths. I can get almost anywhere! And if the roads are out, we can all ride our bikes or walk along paths to get to where need to go.

“And did your school have it’s own garden like ours does? We grow organic fruits and vegetables and even chickens. Boy they are noisy, but they’re kept behind the compost area. For lunches we prepare and eat healthy vegetable-crust pizzas, egg dishes, and other yummy food. No commercially prepared food allowed!

“And we have classes every day about sustainability and climate science, so we can continue the good work your grandparents’ generation started. We know that the climate is still a big problem globally and has led to terrorist attacks; so we’ve joined international groups to communicate with kids everywhere about healthy food, clean water supplies, and climate problems. Our world is getting so small that I have friends in Africa, China and the Mideast.”

“Well,” responded Lola, I’m proud of you and your school for taking this so seriously. Sadly, people knew a lot about climate change 50 years ago, and my grandparents were very worried because of the extreme weather in our country. But not many people believed that they and their cities played a part in creating the water shortages, pollution, devastating fires, weather extremes and disasters, along with rising water and animal extinction. It was difficult convincing people of the new reality, but my mom’s and my generation finally delivered the message, as we were suffering the consequences of poor stewardship of the earth.

“Back when I was your age, we could play at the huge beaches and splash around in the ocean, and now most of the sand is covered with the rising tides. I would love to make you into a sand-mermaid and make sand castles!

“One of our important efforts is this small house we live in as well as our landscaping. My Gramma and Pops’ house was really big and expensive to run, using a lot of power and water. They changed to all native plants and eventually eliminated the lawns. And the city of Lake Oswego expanded the number of paved pathways we could use to get to city parks to play. And then the city planted even more trees, which provide shade and clean air. They enacted higher water usage fees to discourage overwatering, which became a crisis as the summers became hotter and drier.

“I’m so glad my grandparents lived in Lake Oswego. So here we are, safe and sound, with your grandma Erin close by, in our beautiful city and lovely little home and natural garden, and our great neighbors and schools. What more could we ever want?

Laurie N. Lee is a retired attorney and writer, and she and her husband Alan have lived in Lake Oswego most of their 28-year marriage. Their daughter Erin and granddaughter, Lola Rose, currently live with them in Tanglewood.