

From Alan Fujishin email:

Thanks for your interest in the ongoing Fujishin shenanigans, both on and off campus. May history judge us with leniency; especially our spouses, who were mostly lied to.

Lorissa (Gibson) and I almost certainly met at one of the Freshman Orientation events our first year at C of I, but neither of us remember the exact instance. We do remember sharing Dr. Mark Smith's Early Western Civ. class that year, and later Lynda Danielson's Statistics class where we struck up a rivalry, among others. Perhaps it speaks to the easygoing, close-knit nature of a small campus that we saw each other often, and were familiar, but our relationship evolved organically. We don't even remember when we started "dating," just that by the end of sophomore year we were spending lots of time together on and off campus with mutual friends.

We had so many great and influential professors and instructors at C of I. Lorissa speaks highly of Chris Walser, who deepened her appreciation for ichthyology that she carried forward into graduate school and professional life. We both survived upper-division History courses with Mee-Ae Kim, where she tried valiantly to imbue us with a practical usage of historical analysis and clear writing. We were inspired by lectures by Howard Berger and Steve Maughan. As a Graduate Student at University of Minnesota, most of the undergraduate courses I instructed were "Writing Intensive," so I came to appreciate the writing skills I had picked up "across the curriculum," but especially in Sue Schaper's Advanced Writing course. These skills continue to serve as we develop and communicate our farm practices to our clients, policymakers, and the broader public.

We're farming, ranching, and parenting full time now, but I think our unconventional path getting here gives us a unique and well-rounded perspective on those activities. Among other things, farming is really continual and never-ending Systems Analysis. We're constantly processing new information, evaluating it, and incorporating it into our farm practices, seeing how it fits with all the other moving parts, both on and off the farm. Technical knowledge and expertise in a narrower field, like Stream Ecology, becomes important when we're managing 3.6 miles of the Siletz River and its tributaries, a world-renowned habitat for Salmon, Steelhead, and Cutthroat Trout.

I have to run off and start our U-Pick season in a few moments, but I've included some bio blurbs from recent conference presentations. Let us know if you need a photo or other.

Cheers, -- Alan Fujishin

"Alan and Lorissa co-manage Gibson Farms, a 4th-generation family farm in the Siletz Valley. They produce blueberries and grass-fed beef cattle. Alan's agricultural experience spans the state of Oregon, having grown up on a diversified row-crop farm in Malheur County. Lorissa's roots are deep here on the Coast, where over the years her family has raised daffodils, strawberries, raspberries and, of course, blueberries. During a long hiatus from farming, Alan studied History, Politics and Economics, and Spanish in Idaho, Minnesota, and Mexico, and instructed undergraduate History and Writing courses at the University of Minnesota. Lorissa studied History and Biology, earning a Master's Degree in Conservation Biology: Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, and worked on population genetics of fish and wildlife in labs at Oregon State University's Hatfield Marine Science Center and the University of Minnesota. However, they still managed to make it back to the Farm each summer to help with harvests. Together, they're pleased to continue a proven tradition of sustainable practice that stretches back over 75 years."

"Alan and Lorissa took the roundabout way to get back to the farm. While Lorissa grew up caring for blueberries in Siletz, Alan was helping his family raise diversified row crops on 400 acres in Eastern Oregon and Idaho. They both attended The College of Idaho in Caldwell and registered for the same History class: Early Western Civilizations. The rest is, well, History.

Lorissa earned a dual-major Bachelor's Degree in Biology and History, with a Classics minor. Alan triple-majored in History, Politics and Economics, and Spanish. A month after graduation, in 2006, they were getting married in Logsdon, OR, at the Christian school where Lorissa studied. They set up a home in Toledo. Lorissa worked as a laboratory and data technician in a genetics lab at OSU's Hatfield Marine Science Center, and Alan worked at Gibson Farms with Lorissa's Dad, climbing the steep learning curve of farming and ranching on the Coast. Both fired off applications to graduate schools across the country: Alan in Latin American History, and Lorissa in Freshwater and Marine Biology.

Thin rejection letters and fat acceptance packages trickled back from schools. The University of Minnesota offered both students a generous funding package in well-respected departments. After flying out to visit professors, campuses, and the surrounding Twin Cities, Alan and Lorissa packed up for the 2000-mile journey to Saint Paul, MN.

Six years later, Lorissa held a Master's Degree in Conservation Biology: Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. Alan was All-But-Dissertation (ABD) Ph.D. Candidate in History, with a focus on Social History of Natural Disasters in 19th-Century Mexico, planning on a career teaching and researching. However, when unexpected health problems began to push the Gibson's toward retirement, Alan and Lorissa chose to return to the farm and assist with management in 2013.

The pair bring an unusual set of skills and talents to their farm enterprises. They have leveraged these toward trying to learn as much as possible, as quickly as possible, about the dynamic profession of farming and ranching. It's often a daunting task, but they've had a lot of help from experienced family and neighbors.

With the arrival of baby Cora in 2016, things have never been busier on the farm, but Alan and Lorissa are glad to be part of a multi-generational community legacy in the beautiful Siletz Valley."