

GOING PLACES WITH RAMONA

By Melissa Favara

It's exactly right that I live with my husband, our mixed breed dog, and our toddler, Ramona, in our little corner of north Portland: a family in a constant state of adjustment, in a neighborhood that is also daily deciding what it wants to be. The neighbors on one side are retirees who, having raised three children in their Boise Victorian now run a daycare; a beautiful single mom shares the 1950s bungalow on the other side with her 6-year-old son.

During summers a stream of kids from the Self-Enhancement Institute on the next block troop home in t-shirts that read "Life Has Options" on the back. Ramona takes turns on the slide at Unthank Park with youngsters from six countries. Three blocks away Mississippi Avenue is lighting up storefront by storefront. And at our place we restore one room at a time while trying to work and feed the kiddo her USRDAs. We occasionally bump into each other in the kitchen.

We love our eclectic life here.

Another way of saying "our eclectic life," is, of course, "our totally crazy hectic nonstop relationship triage with an intermittently non-serviceable washing machine." The putting out of fires, the fixing of of snacks, the coordinating bedtime to sync up roughly with supper: these are the things that have largely replaced a movie and dinner at the corner bistro. "AND THAT'S OKAY," we're fond of saying when, late at night, we do rock-paper-scissors for the dishes.

My husband, whose picture appears in Wikipedia under the entry Good Guy, and I used to surprise one another with romantic gestures all the time; with Ramona square in the eye of our hurricane, it requires planning to create moments to express that the fire, though banked under a bed of unfolded laundry, is still there. After a particularly difficult



Chapter 2: How Ramona and I found beauty and meaning (for 65 cents) at SCRAP

bedtime that my husband handled recently (during which Ramona's shrieks registered on the Richter scale), I decided to include Ramona in a daddy appreciation project: we walked the seven blocks to SCRAP to make my man a valentine.

SCRAP, an acronym for School and Community Reuse Action Project, is a neighborhood gem nestled between Pix Patisserie and an engine repair shop on North Williams Avenue. A nonprofit, its mission is to "promote creative reuse and environmentally sustainable behavior by providing educational programs and affordable materials to the community."

What this looks like in practice is a brightly lit room crowded with the leftover detritus of school and commerce: heaps of buttons, boxes of old wrapping paper, wire spools, loose beads, empty ink bottles, fabric remnants of all descriptions, abandoned yearbooks. SCRAP offers these donated materials for a song, and hosts inexpensive

classes for children and adults to make lovely new things out of the leftover bits of old items – a beautiful idea if you think about it. Examples of possible projects dangle and hang from ceilings and walls: a wreath fashioned of spent wine corks, mobiles afloat with Christmas ornaments and matchbooks, wallets sewn out of outdated upholstery samples.

Ramona helped me to pick out an old playbill for South Pacific, a few ancient Miller paint samples, and a flyer for the 1959 Oregon Centennial Exposition (total cost: 65 cents). At a table in the workshop room, we played with snub-nosed scissors and paste (only a LOT of which ended up in Ramona's hair). An hour later we had a lopsided paper heart decorated with paint sample stars and cut-and-pasted text, which read: It Could Happen/ A love story/ You'll Remember Oregon/ I'm in Love With a Wonderful Guy.

Okay, so it's a little abstract and relies pretty heavily on South Pacific, but Ramona and I are delighted with our valentine, and I think my husband will be, too. He knows we sneaked off on a Saturday to do something nice for him while he got to share a moment with college football (that alone is something). Marriage with a kid in Portland is much like a collage valentine – everyday materials and odd castoffs forged together, do-it-yourself style, into something new, unlikely and unexpectedly lovely.

If you go:

SCRAP is located at 3901A N Williams Ave. and is open Wednesday through Saturday 11 am to 6 pm and Sundays noon to 5. SCRAP hosts birthday parties and offers four workshops per month – two for children and two for adults – and none costs more than \$25. Visit their Web site at www.scrapaction.org or call 503-294-0769.

GIVE FUN & FITNESS
Gymnastics classes for kids

FREE TRIAL CLASS FOR NEW STUDENTS!
Classes, camps & birthday parties.
Need a night off? Try Parents' Night Out.
116 N. Page St. - Portland 97227
503-238-9887
rosecitygym.com

www.shorTcakephotoTography.com

503. 806.0199

Dance Instruction for All Ages

FIRED-UP DANCE

Tap/Jazz/Ballet/Hip Hop/Tumbling
Combination Classes/Children's Program/Adult Classes
NEW CLASSES FORMING
Free Class Level Evaluation
With this coupon receive your 1st class free
Not valid with other offers. New students only.

15603 SW Pacific Hwy. Tigard, OR 97223 **503-620-3155**
www.GetFiredUpDance.com