

# A break in our routines

by Scott R. Lebin



PHOTO: ANNIE SPRATT, MEDIA BAKERY

*Special occasions change the rhythm of our lives.*

The cycle of life is filled with rhythms that we learn from childhood. Morning and night; spring, summer, fall and winter; child, teenager, young adult, adult and senior citizen; and work, weekends, vacations and holidays. These are all cycles that we get used to and live through in a routine and rhythmic way. Of course, routines can eventually become monotonous and lose their sense of excitement. As children we were excited and sometimes nervous about our first day at school, our first-time skiing or swimming, our first date or our first graduation from school. These special

moments add an excitement to our routine, and these “Special Occasions” change the rhythm of our life and create a snapshot in time that we easily remember in the story of our lives.

It is Paddington Bear who uses the “hard stare” his Aunt Lucy taught him to use only on special occasions. In this instance the “stare” is used when someone is out-of-line or doing something that requires a special response. Thus, a change in the normal pattern of behavior can create moments that are unique and require a special response. Children are often taught about special rules that

apply to their demeanor when visitors are present or when they go out into public places; special circumstances require different behaviors from the normal everyday actions exhibited at home.

“Special Occasions” are times when we interact in ways that are different from the systematic repetitive routines of daily life. These are events when life seems to have an extra energy for us, and our minds and spirits propel us forward with vigor that builds our relationships with those individuals who are most important in our lives. When a girl or boyfriend is introduced to parents or family members, there is often an atmosphere that is so special that the story of this first occasion remains a part of the ritual stories generations of family members remember long after the story occurred. Such an impact on our shared memory is what makes special occasions so indelibly imprinted into our life story. The details of these events are even embellished over time to create a rolling of the eyes or hysterical laughter that becomes part of the story telling tradition.

There are many friends who meet annually to spend a weekend together.

Some spend the time cooking, some go to the same destination every year, and some merely meet for dinner to keep up friendships and maintain long-time relationships. Special occasions like these keep us rooted in our past and connected to people who would not be part of our normal routine if there wasn’t something planned to keep these special occasions a part of our lives.

On birthdays we learn from early childhood that our day of birth is very special. From our earliest memories we can recall our childhood parties and the games we played or the special venues we visited to celebrate with our friends. The movies, Chucky Cheese, bowling or wall climbing are the kinds of birthday special occasions many of us remember. These were very special days we looked forward to because they broke the rhythm of our normal life and provided us with unique social experiences. Many of our “special occasions” are focused on specific people who have the most meaning in our lives. Appreciation of special people, special occasions, special holidays and special achievements are learned behaviors that continue through most of our lives.

Recently we ate at one of our favorite restaurants downtown, Carson’s Ribs. Jo Jo, our usual waitress, told us this story. A large family of ten came in to eat and when she approached the table the father said, “Please bring me a large bowl.” She thought that was an odd request, but she said, “You know, the customer is always right!” When she brought the bowl, the father put it in the center of the table and everyone took their cell phones, iPads and electronic watches and placed them in the bowl. The bowl was then placed under the table. During the evening, she noticed that the children and adults all talked together for the entire meal. After the bill was paid, the father put the bowl back on the table and everyone took their electronic devices.

In 2018, you can easily create your own “Special Occasion” either at home or when you go out to eat. Before you have dinner, get everyone to place their electronic devices in a bowl and return to the days when the “Art of Conversation” was not a special occasion but a normal way of life.

## “RICK BARTOW: Things You Know But Cannot Explain”

The Schingoethe Center presents more than 120 paintings, drawings, sculptures and prints on display from one of the nation’s most prominent contemporary Native American artists. This major retrospective exhibition reveals Bartow’s exploration of self-portraiture and animal imagery, often blurring the lines between the two. Many describe his work as transformational.

**OPENING RECEPTION:**  
Tuesday, January 23, 2018 | 5–6:30 p.m.  
Curator’s lecture to follow.  
**EXHIBIT DATES:**  
Tuesday, January 23–Friday, April 13, 2018  
Schingoethe Center | 1315 Prairie St., Aurora  
To register, please visit [auartsandideas.com](http://auartsandideas.com) or call 630-844-4924.

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For more information, visit [aurora.edu/museum](http://aurora.edu/museum).  
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Organized by the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) at the University of Oregon.

