

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

A chance meeting has sad ending

MIRANDA sat on her University Avenue bench and looked at the disheveled street person in front of her.

It was her brother's old friend Eddie, who had once been a vibrant Stanford student, a lively storyteller, an accomplished blue grass musician; and one of her brother's best friends since they met in second grade at Addison School.

Drugs and alcohol had brought him down.

Miranda remembered the wild days of her teen years; and how she had looked up to Eddie as a friend of her older brother; one of the fierce boys that she revered. She thought of her own days flying close to the flame.

"What have you been up to?" Miranda asked.

"Not much," said Eddie. "The usu-

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al." He massaged his long red beard with both hands.

"How's your mom," asked Miranda. "Is she still with us?"

Eddie's mother had been a CPA. His dad was a barber on University Avenue, in the barbershop under the President Hotel.

"Yup," said Eddie. "Mom is still with us. I stay with her sometimes, when I'm not living down by the creek. She's going strong. She will probably outlive me. Come over and visit us. She would be glad to see you."

"I'd like to do that," said Miranda.

"I heard your mom passed," Eddie continued.

"Yes," Miranda said. "That's partly why I'm back in town. I'm going to sell the old house."

"Is that where you're staying?" asked Eddie.

"It is," said Miranda.

"I spent a lot of time in that place with Tom," said Eddie. "We began a lot of our escapades in that house. Buying 40s and then going on to the campus to hang out."

"I remember," said Miranda. The pain of her brother's alcoholic death two decades earlier hit her anew.

"Coming back to Palo Alto, I feel like I've fallen in a time warp," she continued.

"Everything has changed."

"Yes," said Eddie. "But also nothing has changed."

"You're still a philosopher, Eddie," she said.

He smiled. His cell phone rang. "Got to go, Miranda," said Eddie. "Business calls. See you round."

"It's great to see you, Eddie," she replied. Miranda suddenly felt sad.

"You, too, Miranda," said Eddie. "I was just thinking about you this morning. And here you materialize on the street. Funny how that works. Know what I mean?"

"Sure," said Miranda.

"I carry you in my heart, Miranda," said Eddie. "If there's anything I can do for you, please let me know."

"I will," said Miranda.

Eddie ambled down the street. Miranda watched him go. She felt lucky to be alive. But she also felt like crying.