

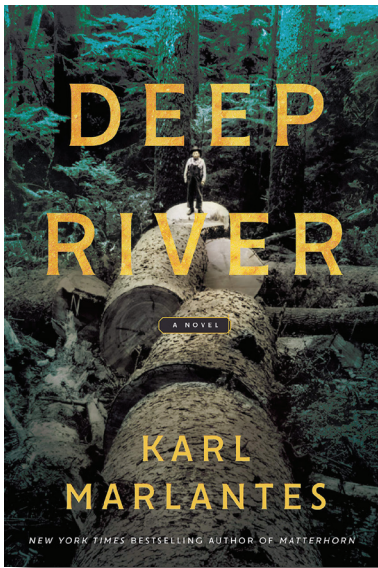
## Deep River Explores Logging, Fishing in the Lower Columbia Region

Author Karl Marlantes makes appearance in Astoria

By Scott Laird

Washington author Karl Marlantes made an appearance in Astoria on January 21 as part of the Columbia Forum speaker series, and discussed his recent novel *Deep River*.

*Deep River* is a family logging epic, set in the early 1900s around the mouth of the Columbia River, and tracks the lives of the Koski family of siblings, along with other Finnish immigrants who work in the logging, fishing, and canning industries in Astoria and southwest Washington. At over 700 pages long, the story chronicles the immigrant experience and their communities in the Pacific Northwest,



life in gypo logging camps in Washington between the Columbia River and Willapa Bay, fishing on the Columbia River, the quickly growing cannery business in Astoria, bootlegging in the 1920s, and the start of organized labor unions and the violence it provoked, including the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – also known as the Wobblies.

Marlantes grew up in Seaside, where he worked in commercial fishing with his grandfather. He graduated from Yale University and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University before serving as a Marine in Vietnam. In addition to *Deep River*, Marlantes is the best-selling author of the novel *Matterhorn* based on his experiences in Vietnam, and *What It Is Like to Go to War*, a non-fiction book about soldiering and life after military service.

Marlantes spoke for about 45 min-

utes at the Liberty Theater before taking questions from an interested audience of about 200 people.

Marlantes, who comes from Finnish ancestry, used his own personal stories from his parents, grandparents, and other relatives, as background material, along with extensive research into the Nordic immigrant populations who chose to settle in the Lower Columbia region. He said his father's first language was Greek, and his mother, who was born in the U.S., didn't start speaking English until she started attending school in the first grade – her first language was Finnish. "My mother's father spoke Norwegian, my grandmother spoke Finn, and divorced him and married a Swede, so I grew up hearing

five languages. But I can't speak any of them, although I can say 'Pass the cookies,' in all of them! But my grandparents wanted us to grow up and speak English."

Marlantes said his Norwegian grandmother was a communist and an atheist, two themes that show up in *Deep River*. "I remember her looking out the window at the Columbia River and I asked her if she thought there was any kind of deity, and her answer was, 'If there is, it's the river.' She had a special relationship with the river, and that was what I was thinking about when I first envisioned the idea for this book."

Communism and workers organizing for better rights plays a central role in the book, in fact famous IWW organizer Joe Hill makes a brief appearance in Marlantes' story. "I remember when we would

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## City Council Considers Parking Plan

The Vernonia City Council held a Public Hearing on January 21 to hear a report from City staff and public comment on a proposed revision to City Zoning Codes that address downtown parking standards. The revisions under consideration were proposed by the Vernonia Planning Commission and would require new businesses to waive current parking requirements in the Downtown Zone and instead pay an annual Downtown Parking Fee.

City Planner Matt Straite presented the staff report to the Council and explained the need to revise the current zoning codes. Straite told the Council under current code, when a property in the downtown zone wants to change its use – as an example from office space to a restaurant – the new business is required to obtain a land use permit, go through a design review, and address any city code provisions. Buildings that have sat vacant for more than one year also require a design review to obtain a new land use permit. These parking requirements are only for the Downtown Zone, specifically for new commercial development or properties undergoing a change of use, and does not affect current businesses already operating or residential properties.

Straite noted that the City has been discussing Downtown parking since the mid 1990s, primarily centered around a need for additional parking during the peak summer tourist season. In a recent review of the current code, the Planning Commission found that parking in downtown Vernonia has been a challenge, specifically for some of the older structures that have no property be-

yond the structure footprint when the only property owned by the applicant is the structure; the current zoning code requires the property owner to provide off street parking for almost all uses. The Planning Commission also found that having to provide parking is a disincentive to economic development within the Downtown. "If a business can't provide the parking required in our code, we can't make the findings to approve the design review and the use gets denied," explained Straite. "Without the parking, there is no use. That's why this is so important."

The City owns vacant property from various FEMA flood buyouts from the 2007 flood which have been acting as make-shift parking lots since the structures were removed – one lot is where the old West Oregon Electric Cooperative headquarters was located at the corner of Adams Avenue and Maple Street (gravel), and another is the paved lot across the street. On FEMA buyout properties the buildings were demolished and the property now has very strict requirements from FEMA regarding what can, and can't be done to the property. They must remain vacant. They also are not permitted to have any modification that effects the water runoff.

Straite told the Council those lots make ideal parking areas in Downtown for business that cannot provide their own parking. Straite said the 2007 flood and the resulting buyout properties with FEMA restrictions has changed the parking discussion, and the desire to renovate parking-less structures in Downtown created a need for this proposed parking revision. As an example, Straite

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## Digital Newspaper Archive Project Accessible Online

Vernonia Library has made some historic local newspapers available

The Vernonia Public Library has been working with the Oregon Digital Newspaper Project (ODNP) since 2017 to make historic and current Vernonia newspapers available online through their website <https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/>.

Vernonia Library Director Shannon Romtvedt decided contributing content to the Historic Oregon Newspapers website, powered through the University of Oregon Library, was the best way to make Vernonia history widely accessible and to preserve a local history resource. Current newspapers available on the site include: *The Inde-*

*pendent* (2003-2012, some issues) and *Vernonia's Voice* (2007-present). She said volunteers are in the process of uploading *The Vernonia Eagle* (1939-1956), and said she hopes to have several other newspapers that were featured in the community for a shorter period of time also on the site in the future.

Romtvedt says she is excited to have these historic newspapers available to the public in an easily accessible, on-line and digital format. "I found through processing the newspapers for uploading just how interesting our history is. I really hope people will just read Vernonia history

for fun, or research families, or old businesses, or local groups that might spark their interest. It was just fascinating going through the old papers and seeing the progression of the community, the boom and bust, the rise and fall of the economy, and the social issues. I think it will be a great tool for students to research things they are studying in school, and get a chance to look more locally and see how world events impacted

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