

PITCH PERFECT

"I keep going to a lot of places and ending up somewhere I've already been."

— Don Draper, lead character in TV series, "Mad Men"

"It's hard enough to write a good drama, it's much harder to write a good comedy, and it's hardest of all to write a drama with comedy. Which is what life is."

— Jack Lemmon, actor

Oh, how to characterize this Lincoln City pitchman? A mixture of Jack Lemmon, Peter Sellers and PT Barnum?

Ed Dreistadt is in his office, just above the Lincoln City Council Chambers. He sits me down at a small table, and we both roll up our sleeves for several hours of riffing with this

65-year-old's adventure as a "wild and crazy guy" (in the words of Steven Martin).

"I've admittedly had a strange life. Not sure how you are going to cram it into an article."

He may be the lead cheerleader for the City's new iteration of the Lincoln City Visitor & Convention Bureau — Explore Lincoln City (ELC) — but his pathway to our neck of the woods (four and a half years as director of ELC) reads like a script from a Monty Python and David Mamet collision of ideas.

This unofficial member of the Mad Men Club, Ed Dreistadt (he laughs that his wife opted to NOT change her last name upon marriage) has a heck of a resume, typical of someone who has been in marketing and advertising for more than two-thirds of his life.

He's pretty confident of his positive role in society: "The concept of advertising is to identify the consumer's needs and present the product as the solution. The game is to identify the Unique Selling Proposition: the point of difference between your competitor's product and use it to move a product."

The career of this "ad man" has been a minefield of ups and downs, deals for fat contracts and plenty of lost accounts, and a career tied to the "boom or bust" magic of selling products.



Ed donning the Sasquatch suit to promote Haunted Taft in Lincoln City

Steel town, college radio, AM rock

His early roots spread back to a typical Pittsburgh working-class: his mother's family came from Northern Ireland, and his father's side came over in the 1860s from Southern Germany.

Right out the gate we talk about his infamous birthplace — Homestead Hospital, 1954. And the fact that his grandfather Dreistadt came from coal miner DNA.

The Homestead Strike was a labor/union dispute between the Carnegie Steel Company and workers. That was July 6, 1892, in Homestead, Pennsylvania. The strike went against the company's management — industrialists Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick — who hired scabs (strikebreakers) and the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. A gun battle ensued in which a number of strikers and Pinkerton agents were killed and many more were injured.

The young Ed worked with scrap metal and learned how to weld and take apart/put back together a lot of construction equipment.

He was a cartoonist for the high school paper, and he ended up in New Wilmington at Westminster College taking a potpourri of classes — chemistry, psychology and history. His highlight there was working on the college radio station — WKPS. He even did DJ gigs with a country station, WWIZ; easy listening, WEDO; and late-night rock 'n roll on WKST.

Graduate school was in Athens, Ohio, at Ohio University, where he turned a speech and psychology BA from Westminster to a

Masters in radio-TV management from OU.

Then he got into 13Q, a rock AM radio station, as a salesperson. "You want to get a picture of my PTSD associated with FM eating up AM? Watch that show, 'WKRP Cincinnati.' Every new rating book was a disaster. I was, I guess, too ethical to sell something like that and didn't do all that well."

That hardcore sales experience — banging on doors to pitch AM radio spots on a dying station — taught him a valuable lesson that resonates today: "I have had so many doors slammed on me. I have a very thick skin."

Advertising agent par excellence

It takes some cramming to get from his days on the advertising account for Coca-Cola's Mello Yello, to reluctantly pitching Doral cigarettes, then to promoting the new \$40 million-dollar Apollo's Chariot roller coaster at Busch Gardens, the one where the goose smacked romance novel icon Fabio in the face on its first run, and finally to our Central Oregon Coast.

He's all in for promoting Lincoln City and its seven miles of beaches and 9,500 residents. He sees all that 101 traffic as among one of the unique opportunities — here are nine million vehicles driving through each year "with those 22 million sets of eyeballs looking at all the things we have to offer our guests."

"When I first started here, the city had 13 different logos. One of my first jobs was to help come up with a single city brand, graphics standards and an official typeface."

TODAY... ALL THE BUZZ

FABIO: IT'S NOT FUNNY! Roller-coaster goose puts him in bed for 3 days

If you chuckled when you heard Fabio got slammed in the schmozz by a goose while riding a roller-coaster, you're not alone — but the hunky model insists the goosung was no joke. "It's not funny — I could have lost my model good looks," he squawked. "My nose could have been broken. I could have lost an eye. I am very lucky to escape with the small injuries I did."

Fabio's mother Flora told The ENQUIRER after the bizarre accident: "He's still too shook up to talk. He's been in bed for three days!"

Chiseled-jawed Fabio — along with three dozen lunk-head women — was promoting the new Apollo's Chariot roller-coaster at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Va., on March 30.

"The last thing on this earth I expected was to be hit in the face by a bird," he said. "There were feathers flying everywhere."

"Building a roller-coaster on a lake inhabited by geese could cause



more serious accidents or possibly a child's death." But Busch Gardens spokesman Dean Sullivan told The ENQUIRER: "It was not our bird. There are no geese in our park." And Las Vegas oddsmaker Joel Brewster declared "President Clinton has a better chance of becoming the King of England than a person has of getting hit in the face by a goose whacked by a flying bird while riding on a roller-coaster."

But Fabio, 46, took his lumps with gallantry.

"At one point he said, 'I'm glad it was me and not one of the girls,'" revealed Kelley Daspi, communications manager for Williamsburg Community Hospital, where he received two stitches.

And the goose? Sadly, it was a dead duck.



Thrills & chills

Fallout from the Fabio-geese collision

A consistent message is what Ed is after.

He says the needle is moving — the city promises people that "we have a small beach town feel but we're also seven miles long and full of fun surprises."

His life is about imagining the potential in things. "As a product, Lincoln City is nothing to sneeze at. We have these beautiful places like Cascade Head and Drift Creek Falls. Seven miles of beautiful beaches."

He counts on the Chinook Winds Casino Resort as an anchor for major headline entertainment. He sees the outlet mall as a great attraction, as well as all the "treasure trove of quirky, one-of-a-kind businesses and eateries."

With his background in theme parks such as Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia; and Stone Mountain Park near Atlanta, Ed's seen recession hit the tourism industry hard. He is of the belief that "nothing goes in a straight line forever" and after more than nine years of economic growth, he expects another recession sometime soon.

However, Ed Dreistadt believes places like Lincoln City are positioned to weather a national economic downturn.

Looking at the Transient Room Tax (TRT) revenue reports, he says he's pleased to see that while growth halted during the Great Recession, revenue collected by lodging properties didn't decrease. "It held steady during the bad times."

When money gets tight, families still want to travel, but they look for places to vacation closer in. "People are willing to trade down, say, from a trip to Hawaii or Paris, to something nearby."

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Read on as Deep Dive continues at www.oregoncoasttoday.com.

Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, "Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam," and a non-fiction book, "No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America's Education System."