



Photo by Brad Heineke The Clackamas Print

Above: Mayor of Oregon City, Doug Neeley, and Mayor of West Linn, John Kovash, cut the ribbon on the Arch Bridge. An icon since 1922, the bridge has been closed for the past two years for restoration.

Festival highlights Arch Bridge history

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Associate Arts & Culture

The smell of fried bread made from a recipe, borrowed from eastern Oregon Native Americans, was strong in the air as people strolled towards the festivities surrounding the opening of the Oregon City Arch Bridge on Sunday.

"Did you know this was voted most beautiful bridge when it was built?" said city commissioner Carol Pauli as she explained how much the bridge means to the communities of Oregon City and West Linn. "We share the same space, there's just a river between us."

Congressman Kurt Schrader made an appearance for the event, speaking briefly at the dedication for the bridge.

"Well, it's wonderful to be here to celebrate that Congress actually did something," he said to everyone's enjoyment. Schrader also stated that ODOT got the job done on budget and on time, receiving loud applause from the crowd.

"One of the things that I think is really important [is] we promised members of this community that we'd have this open within 22 months and we made that and I'm very pleased that we were able to keep that promise," said Don Hamilton, ODOT spokesperson.

Many other officials attended the festival, primarily the rededication celebration that took place on the Oregon City side of the bridge at 2 p.m. on Sunday. The impressive list of dignitaries included:

Oregon City Mayor Doug Neely; West Linn Mayor John

Kovash; Clackamas County Chair Charlotte Lehan; ODOT Transportation manager Jason Tell; Tribal Council Member of the Grand Ronde tribe, Jon A. George; ODOT Transportation Director Mat Garrett; FHA Administrator Phil Ditzler; Tim Hendrix and Josh Smith of Wildish and Oregon City Manager Lloyd Purdy.

The festival wasn't just a rededication of the bridge, it was also a rededication of 47 couples renewing their collective wedding vows; a group that included Neely, who was celebrating nearly 50 years with his wife, and Pauli, celebrating nearly 20 years with her husband.

Rhonda and Don Mircovich were also renewing their wedding vows after almost 30 years of marriage and thoroughly enjoyed walking on the deck of the bridge.

"I come this way to work in Lake Oswego four days a week and I've missed it terribly," said Rhonda.

Main Street was closed for several blocks near the bridge allowing pedestrians full access to the streets and the antique cars that lined both sides of the road. Both the old and young enjoyed seeing these beautifully restored vehicles from days gone by: Fords, Plymouths, Cadillacs, Chevrolets, a 1915 Kissel Kar, even a Willys Jeep and an old fire truck.

The bagpipe players began the procession, adding a sense of formality to the parade as they led the antique cars up the bridge into West Linn for the inaugural crossing. After the cars slowly made their way past the spectators, the Girl Scouts strode proudly carrying their banner between them.

Following were the bicyclists,

who were put out by the closure of the bridge and were forced to use the Bridge Shuttle to get back and forth between Oregon City and West Linn.

The feeling of being a very real part of history was palpable and the festivities were reminiscent of the original bridge opening with the parade, crowds and speeches.

"I'm pleased that they did very little to it in terms of structure" said Neely of the finished product. "It's really a historically significant bridge."

Many businesses were affected during the construction and while some closed, others filled the empty void left behind.

"Some of the businesses didn't make it through the recession, street changes and closure of the bridge, but we've had twice as many businesses come in than we've had gone out," said Neely. "You see a lot of restoration work being done; we've got a lot storefront improvements that are occurring along Main Street."

"The construction was rough, it was hard on us," said JJ Foster, co-owner of Wynona Studios, located at 719 Main Street. "It's made it hard for people who are coming from Lake Oswego, Wilsonville [and] West Linn to get to us."

"There were times when it would take someone 45 minutes to get from Lake Oswego to here," Foster continued. "The Arch Bridge seems like an extension of Highway 43, so it's easy for people to just keep coming."

The hope all around is that the bridge opening will continue to improve business in the area.

"I do think that it's going to be a lot easier to get here and it will be more welcome," said Foster.

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Arts & Culture CALENDAR

October 17-23

WEDNESDAY - 10/17	THURSDAY - 10/18	FRIDAY - 10/19	SATURDAY - 10/20	SUNDAY - 10/21	MONDAY - 10/22	TUESDAY - 10/23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event: The Shanghai Woolies play at Jimmy Mak's - Portland 8 p.m. • Event: Switch-foot performs at the Crystal Ballroom - Portland 8 p.m. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event: Taking Back Sunday takes the Crystal Ballroom - Portland Oregon 8 p.m. • Event: Sinatra Fest 2012 begins at Tony Starlight's - Portland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event: Sinatra Fest 2012 will be held at Tony Starlight's - Portland • Event: Kilgore, Wakeling, Porter Ivories Jazz Lounge - Portland 8 p.m - 11 p.m. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event: Morton City Soundtrack performs at the Hawthorne Theatre - Portland 7 p.m. 		