

NEWSBRIEFS

Vernonia continues to weather the storm

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has granted Vernonia, Ore., flood victims an extension on the government-issued trailers they were set to be evicted from in June.

Some families have left Vernonia since floods devastated the town in December 2007, but many remain, many living in trailers as they try to repair their ruined homes. FEMA had said those residents' trailer terms were up, and 15 families faced eviction by a fast-approaching June 8 deadline.

On May 7, Senator Ron Wyden beseeched FEMA in a letter to let Vernonians keep their trailers for four more months. Wyden said Vernonia residents have shown resilience and responsibility in rebuilding their town, but they need more time — and because the displaced families weren't allowed to move into the trailers until four months after the flood, they should be able to stay in them for that much longer.

On May 13, FEMA granted an extension on the trailers until October 8.

"FEMA deserves a lot of credit for doing the right thing for the families of Vernonia who are still working hard to put their lives back together following the flood," Wyden said. "Now those families have a little more of what they need most — time to continue picking up the pieces."



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 Satan knows your name
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 Begging on your knees
 Lust variety
 You're the founder of your disease

Steven Grover

The Calculus of Love

Imagine

An orange locust of wind
 Or salmon colored mountains rolling in
 Then blue Hibiscus
 Resting against the jaws of clouds

Imagine

That the aroma of your eyes
 Could linger
 That the fragrance of your smile
 Was trapped,
 Caught in a nectar of air
 Gleaming

Kareem Ali

**On the
 Yellow
 Line**

By Thea
 Constantine

The sun is shining as I make my way to the MAX stop. I've brought a book for company.

It's an odd little number called "The Rose City of the World, Portland Oregon" by Ruby Fay Purdy. I picked it up at the library for research on something else I was doing and found it too good to pass up. It was written in 1947. It's sort of a guide book/general invitation to Portland from an enthusiastic citizen.

It's definitely springtime. As I wait for the train a colorful group of moped enthusiasts drive by riding in pairs. Mothers with prams and kids on skateboards wheel past. As I board, a large woman stands at the top of the stairs leading to my chosen seating area. She seems astounded that I actually climb them and require her to move aside. I find my spot and turn my attention to Ms. Ruby Fay's foreword, in which she invites her reader to come and live in the Rose City of the World and find "happiness and prosperity." Ms. Purdy details Portland's history in all its pre-PC glory. This is the kind of book my school library was filled with — the kind we did "book reports" on. She details civic leaders, Portland's early government, banks, parks, schools, newspapers, railroads, utilities, and more. Paramount throughout is the history of the Rose City's title. As I pass Pioneer Square I notice the golden roses at the top of the columns and imagine Ms. Purdy's satisfaction. I wonder if she lived to see them or not.

I am particularly fascinated with the sections on the Royal Rosarians and the Mystic Order of the Rose. Springtime in Portland means the Rose Festival even now, but back then the festival had a King named Rex Oregonus whose identity was kept secret "until the Queens Ball when his huge beard was removed." Eventually, he was abandoned in favor of the Rose Queen.

As we stop at Saturday Market, children in elaborate balloon animal hats board. I'm reminded of the "Human Rosebud" portion of the old parade I just read up on, with 8,000 flower-decorated children at its inception. I think that might still go over well.

There's also several groups of backpackers and runaways — another sure sign of spring in the Northwest. Someone bitches that the MAX maps aren't translated in "all fifty languages." Another woman wonders what all the runaways are running from.

According to Ms. Purdy, The Mystic Order of the Rose welcomed passengers from "excursions and conventions" by meeting them at the train and giving each a rose. Part of the Order's mission was to ensure everyone referred to Portland as The Rose City. She goes on to say that the Order's initiation ceremony is an impressive one and, apparently, many foreign dignitaries and even Presidents counted themselves as part of the Order. I amuse myself with the image of welcoming runaways to town as a member of the new Mystic Order, perhaps following the gift of a rose with a condom and a clean needle. And don't forget it's the Rose City.

The Starr Bros., owners of one of Portland's first banks and the local distillery, wrote adverts that urged folks to keep the money in the state, and if people must and will have whiskey, let them buy Starr unadulterated white whiskey. On the other side of the coin are the brass four-spout water fountains still in existence downtown, built by Simon Benson, hotelier and lumber man, so his workers could get an honest drink of fresh water without having to enter a tavern.

I notice a man at the next stop. His face is covered in blood, and he starts to follow two young girls onto the train. He stops short, however, of actually getting on. One of the girls informs me he'd fallen onto the tracks twice in a drunken haze, nearly being killed by a train. She had kindly stopped and asked the driver to call a medic for him. I can't help but wonder if a glass of unadulterated white whiskey would have served him better. Maybe not. Probably should have stuck to the fountains.

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