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Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

10 years ago this week — 2005

"Before Monday I thought I knew what cold was."

Cold, Phil Huff now knows, isn't waiting for the car's heater to come on in the morning.

Cold is standing alone outside in the middle of a damp winter night, dressed only in buckskins, a woolen robe and soggy moccasins, the only distractions the calls of coyotes and a bright moon appearing between rain showers.

That's what Huff and a dozen fellow Lewis and Clark re-enactors experienced at Fort Clatsop last week when they took on the roles of Corps of Discovery members for the park's three-day living history program, "Wintering Over - Snuggly fixed in their huts."

Jackson Lee Taggart, the first Clatsop County baby of 2005, was actually due 12 days before New Years, but that doesn't make him late.

"I guess being the first baby of the year makes him right on time," said mom Robbin Taggart, 26, of Astoria.

The dawn of 2005 finds the Columbia-Pacific region in a state of keen anticipation. This is the 200th anniversary of the year that Lewis and Clark reached the mouth of the Columbia River.

Will there be a flood of tourists? Will it be a bonanza for the tourism sector of our regional economy? We would not hazard a guess. The significant thing is that we are ready. The increase in the number of accommodations and restaurants over the past few years is considerable.

With or without a major influx of tourists, 2005 looks to be a good year in these parts, on a number of levels including the economic and the cultural. Astoria is coming of age.

50 years ago — 1965

As new snows plagued Clatsop County Monday, the weather bureau revised an earlier forecast late in the morning only to promise "possibly heavy amounts of snow along the coastal range and the coast" Monday night and Tuesday.

Authorities searched Astoria High School carefully for two hours Tuesday morning after firemen received a phone call at 6:12 a.m. from a "young male voice" warning that a time bomb had been set in the school to go off before noon.

The search showed no sign of entry into the tightly locked building and no evidence of a bomb, so authorities permitted the opening of school at the regular time Tuesday morning.

The port of Astoria will sell the Coast Guard a 15 acre tract at Clatsop airport and the Coast Guard will build its own hangar and shop facilities for the Coast Guard air station, it was announced Thursday.

The Coast Guard will build about \$300,000 worth of facilities, including hangar space for three helicopters, shops, office space, search and rescue operations center, ready rooms, and communications center.

Physical rehabilitation of Tongue Point Naval Station to house a Job Corps training center for 1,250 young men has been started by Philco Corporation, training center Director Douglas V. Olds said Thursday.

The Philco corporation, Olds said, has obtained a direct contract from the U.S. Government to do the rehabilitation work, estimated to cost more than \$1 million.

75 years ago — 1940

The old, old dream of a small boat canal connecting the Columbia River with Puget Sound via Grays and Willapa harbors, first broached by Jefferson Davis when he was secretary of war in 1856 and periodically revived since then, is apparently coming to life once more.

The last time this idea was but forward seriously was in 1933, in mid-depression when the need for jobs was acute. It went so far that the state of Washington named a commission to study the idea, which submitted a favorable report only to have the army engineers turn it down.

Now the idea is suggested again in an article in the current issue of Pacific Motorboat, Seattle-published yachting magazine, and in an interview with Charles Mann, Tacoma, in the Portland Oregonian.

The Pacific Motorboat article suggests that the series of canals — estimated to cost around \$34,000,000 — would make an inland waterway stretching from the upper reaches of the Columbia and Lewiston on the Snake River to Juneau, Alaska — the longest inland waterway on earth.

The magazines suggests and increasing future use by pleasure boats, log rafts, and other small commercial craft, with tolls possibly producing \$2,500,000 annually by 1942 if expected commerce should develop.

"At a cost of \$3,000,000," Mann declared, "it would be easy for the United States engineers to dig a seven-foot ditch through the cranberry bogs between Ilwaco and Willapa harbor to give barges and small craft a safe year-round channel to bring logs from western Washington to Longview. Then, when Grays harbor sees how successful that canal will be, there will be a movement for a similar ditch between Willapa and Grays harbor, and by that time we Puget Sounders will get over our prejudice and demand a waterway connecting Grays harbor and Puget Sound."

The canal would take off from the Columbia at about the mouth of Chinook River, running through low land to the southern end of Willapa bay. From the northern end of that bay it would run through similar lowland to Grays harbor. From the east end of that harbor it would run via the Chehalis River to connect with streams emptying into Puget Sound near Olympia.

Why poke holes in data security?

BY SEN. RON WYDEN

Hardly a week goes by without a new report of some massive data theft that has put financial information, trade secrets or government records into the hands of computer hackers.

The best defense against these attacks is clear: strong data encryption and more secure technology systems.

The leaders of U.S. intelligence agencies hold a different view. Most prominently, James Comey, the FBI director, is lobbying Congress to require that electronics manufacturers create intentional security holes — so-called back doors — that would enable the government to access data on every American's cellphone and computer, even if it is protected by encryption.

Unfortunately, there are no magic keys that can be used only by good guys for legitimate reasons. There is only strong security or weak security.

Americans are demanding strong security for their personal data. Comey and others are suggesting that security features shouldn't be too strong, because this could interfere with surveillance conducted for law enforcement or intelligence purposes. The problem with this logic is that building a back door into every cellphone, tablet, or laptop means deliberately creating weaknesses that hackers and foreign governments can exploit. Mandating back doors also removes the incentive for companies to develop more secure products at the time people need them most; if you're building a wall with a hole in it, how much are you going to invest in locks and barbed wire? What these officials are proposing would be bad for personal data security and bad for business and must be opposed by Congress.

In Silicon Valley several weeks ago, I convened a roundtable of executives from America's most innovative tech companies. They made it clear that widespread availability of data encryption technology is what consumers are demanding.

It is also good public policy. For years, officials of intelligence agencies like the National Security Agency, as well as the Department of Justice, made misleading and outright inaccurate statements to Congress about data surveillance programs — not once, but repeatedly for over a decade. These agencies spied on huge numbers of law-abiding Americans, and their dragnet surveillance of Americans' data did not make our country safer.



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., rushes to the chamber during a procedural vote on the veteran's benefits bill at the Capitol in Washington, Feb. 25.

Most Americans accept that there are times their government needs to rely on clandestine methods of intelligence gathering to protect national security and ensure public safety. But they also expect government agencies and officials to operate within the boundaries of the law, and they now know how egregiously intelligence agencies abused their trust.

This breach of trust is also hurting U.S. technology companies' bottom line, particularly when trying to sell services and devices in foreign markets. The president's own surveillance review group noted that concern about U.S. surveillance policies "can directly reduce the market share of U.S. companies." One industry estimate suggests that lost market share will cost just the U.S. cloud computing sector \$21 billion to \$35 billion over the next three years.

Tech firms are now investing heavily in new systems, including encryption, to protect consumers from cyberattacks and rebuild the trust of their customers. As one participant at my roundtable put it, "I'd be shocked if anyone in the industry takes the foot off the pedal in terms of building security and encryption into their products."

Built-in back doors have been tried elsewhere with disastrous results. In 2005, for example, Greece discovered that dozens of its senior government officials' phones had been under surveillance for nearly a year. The eavesdropper was never identified, but the vulnerability was

clear: built-in wiretapping features intended to be accessible only to government agencies following a legal process.

Chinese hackers have proved how aggressively they will exploit any security vulnerability. A report last year by a leading cybersecurity company identified more than 100 intrusions in U.S. networks from a single cyberespionage unit in Shanghai. As another tech company leader told me, "Why would we leave a back door lying around?"

Why indeed. The U.S. House of

Representatives recognized how dangerous this idea was and in June approved 293-123, a bipartisan amendment that would prohibit the government from mandating that technology companies build security weaknesses into any of their products. I introduced legislation in the Senate to

accomplish the same goal, and will again at the start of the next session.

Technology is a tool that can be put to legitimate or illegitimate use. And advances in technology always pose a new challenge to law enforcement agencies. But curtailing innovation on data security is no solution, and certainly won't restore public trust in tech companies or government agencies. Instead we should give law enforcement and intelligence agencies the resources they need to adapt, and give the public the data security they demand.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Built-in back doors have been tried elsewhere with disastrous results.

The problem with meaning

By DAVID BROOKS

New York Times News Service

Not long ago, a friend sent me a speech that the great civic leader John Gardner gave to the Stanford Alumni Association 61 years after he graduated from that college.

The speech is chock-full of practical wisdom. I especially liked this passage:

"The things you learn in maturity aren't simple things such as acquiring information and skills. You learn not to engage in self-destructive behavior. You learn not to burn up energy in anxiety. You discover how to manage your tensions. You learn that self-pity and resentment are among the most toxic of drugs. You find that the world loves talent but pays off on character.

"You come to understand that most people are neither for you nor against you; they are thinking about themselves. You learn that no matter how hard you try to please, some people in this world are not going to love you, a lesson that is at first troubling and then really quite relaxing."

Gardner goes on in this wise way. And then, at the end, he goes into a peroration about leading a meaningful life. "Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of your own past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of the experience of humankind as it is passed on to you. ... You are the only one who can put them together into that unique pattern that will be your life."

Gardner puts "meaning" at the apogee of human existence. His speech reminded me how often we've heard that word over the past decades. As my *Times* colleague April Lawson puts

it, "meaning" has become the stand-in concept for everything the soul yearns for and seeks. It is one of the few phrases acceptable in modern parlance to describe a fundamentally spiritual need.

Yet what do we mean when we use the word meaning?

The first thing we mean is that life should be about more than material success. The person leading a meaningful life has found some way of serving others that leads to a feeling of significance.

Second, a meaningful life is more satisfying than a merely happy life. Happiness is about enjoying the present; meaning is about dedicating oneself to the future. Happiness is about receiving; meaningfulness is about giving. Happiness is about upbeat moods and nice experiences. People leading meaningful lives experience a deeper sense of satisfaction.

In this way, meaning is an uplifting state of consciousness. It's what you feel when you're serving things beyond self.

Yet it has to be said, as commonly used today, the word is flabby and vacuous, the product of a culture that has grown inarticulate about inner life.

Let me put it this way: If we look at the people in history who achieved great things — like Nelson Mandela or Albert Schweitzer or Abraham Lincoln — it wasn't because they wanted to bathe luxuriously in their own sense of meaningfulness. They had objective and eternally true standards of justice and injustice. They were indignant when those eternal standards were violated. They subscribed to moral systems — whether secular or religious — that recommended specific ways of being,



David Brooks

and had specific structures of what is right and wrong, and had specific disciplines about how you might get better over time.

Meaningfulness tries to replace structures, standards and disciplines with self-regarding emotion. The ultimate authority of meaningful is the warm tingling we get when we feel significant and meaningful. Meaningfulness tries to replace moral systems with the emotional corona that surrounds acts of charity.

It's a paltry substitute. Because meaningfulness is built solely on an emotion, it is contentless and irreducible. Because it is built solely on emotion, it's subjective and relativistic. You get meaning one way. I get meaning another way. Who is any of us to judge another's emotion?

Because it's based solely on sentiment, it is useless. There are no criteria to determine what kind of meaningfulness is higher. There's no practical manual that would help guide each of us as we move from shallower forms of service to deeper ones. There is no hierarchy of values that would help us select, from among all the things we might do, that activity which is highest and best to do.

Because it's based solely on emotion, it's fleeting. When the sensations of meaningful go away then the cause that once aroused them gets dropped, too. Ennui floods in. Personal crisis follows. There's no reliable ground.

The philosophy of meaningfulness emerges in a culture in which there is no common moral vocabulary or framework. It emerges amid radical pluralism, when people don't want to judge each other. Meaningfulness emerges when the fundamental question is, do we feel good?

Real moral systems are based on a balance of intellectual rigor and aroused moral sentiments. Meaningfulness is pure and self-regarding feeling, the NutraSweet of the inner life.