

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## Chinook leader looked for path forward

The premature death Tuesday of Ray Gardner, chairman of the Chinook Indian Nation, is a sad milestone for the tribe but one that has been foreseen for quite some time.

Gardner loved his cigars and those who knew him well took vicarious pleasure in his enjoyment of their sweet smoke. But in the way of things, tobacco didn't love him back. Perhaps combined with other factors, smoking led to obstructive lung problems that made it difficult for Gardner to breathe in recent years. His health took a turn for the worse around last Christmas and he was hospitalized, eventually coming home and even briefly returning to work, but never recovering until he finally slipped away back to the land of ancestors.

Gardner remained in symbolic leadership of the Chinook Indian Nation up until his death, but effectively turned over organizational management to Vice Chairman Sam Robinson and other members of the Tribal Council in October 2013. They are an energetic and passionate group, still very interested in pursuing formal federal status, something that has been denied this famous tribe since the mid-19th century.

We have often commented in support of righting this wrong as a matter of fundamental social justice. We remain convinced that the healing of old wounds by the conferring of tribal prestige on the Chinookan peoples of the Lower Columbia would be advantageous to everyone here.

The very name "Chinook" could be enormously valuable and profitable if attached in a substantive way to sustainably produced seafood, timber products and social events. We live in the center of one of the Pacific Rim's greatest civilizations, the destination of Lewis and Clark and a host of other famous explorers.

## Timber economy is quite alive

*It's wise to add a jobs fair to Astoria Timber Festival*

One of the illusions about our regional economy is that timber and fishing are dead or dying industries. It is true the shape of both have changed considerably over the past 40 years. But timber, fish processing and fishing are quite alive in Clatsop County.

Based on the accepted economic standard of three jobs per million board feet of lumber harvested, it appears there are some 900 timber jobs in Clatsop County.

This Saturday will see the return of the Astoria Timber Festival — an event that pits high school teams in competition through a variety of events that include axe throwing, climbing and more. It takes place at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

New to this year's event is a jobs fair. Like all industries and professions, logging and millwork must attract a new generation of workers. Kudos to the festival's organizers for adding this component.

A new HBO television production will reignite interest in the Corps of Discovery and the native peoples they encountered, of whom the Chinook and Clatsop were among the most important.

Descendants of men and women who created this civilization continue to live among us as proud and fully integrated members of modern communities. They should not be penalized for their ancestors' hospitality and welcoming nature, which permitted white settlers to make themselves at home here.

Pragmatically, there are many obstacles to obtaining formal federal status that are unlikely to be overcome anytime soon. Although the Bureau of Indian Affairs has helpfully revamped some of its criteria for tribal recognition and acknowledgment, a Republican Congress won't be inclined to favor the Chinook cause, especially when some existing resource users such as the Dungeness crab fleet fear potential tribal encroachment.

Also complicating matters is a simmering dispute among Clatsop descendants, some of whom have formed an alliance with Nehalem people to the south, while hundreds of others remain under the organizational umbrella of the Chinook Indian Nation.

The majority of residents without any Indian DNA can stand back from all this, and yet wish the best for all our neighbors who pursue the dream of finding a renewed connection to their glorious past, along with a brighter path to the future. We're certain Gardner hoped for reconciliation and cooperation among all residents of his people's historical homeland. This is an aspiration we all ought to share.

If you have memories of a Pacific Northwest sawmill in the 1950s and have walked through a contemporary mill such as Hampton Affiliates in Warrenton, the contrast is striking. Today's mills use far fewer people. They depend on computers. Contrary to the belief that wilderness designations reduced sawmill employment, automation was the principal cause.

But mills do require a highly skilled workforce, and these are good jobs. So are jobs in the woods.

The largest privately owned timber parcel in Clatsop County has gone through a series of owners over the past 30 years, from Crown Zellerbach to Cavenham to Willamette Industries to Weyerhaeuser to the Campbell Group. This remains a significant resource that creates its own employment base.

Good luck to all of the high school teams. And we hope that some of these young people will connect with future employment.

# The real story behind the St. Helens coal denial

By CATHERINE M. MATER  
*For The Daily Astorian*

In August, the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) rendered decision on project funding from state lottery funds funneled through ConnectOregon.

Since ConnectOregon passage into Oregon law, projects forwarded to the OTC have been summarily approved ... until last year when a berth improvement project at the Port of St. Helens was denied funding.

The project proposed to assist coal company Ambre Energy in the transport of coal through Oregon to foreign energy markets via the Port.

The project was rejected on the basis of not complying with ConnectOregon legal requirements, but the criticisms — and accolades — pouring in from the public following the OTC decision squarely focused on the debate over Oregon's role in coal.

The real issue surrounding the story is not coal, it's fraud: the submittal of fraudulent information to a public entity for the purpose of securing public funds. The Port of St. Helens submitted a request for \$2 million in ConnectOregon lottery funds to pair with a \$3 million match the Port said Ambre Energy had committed for the project. All ConnectOregon projects are required to have a funding match in order to be eligible for public funds.

The problem? Coal issue aside — the Port never had a commitment from Ambre Energy to do the proj-

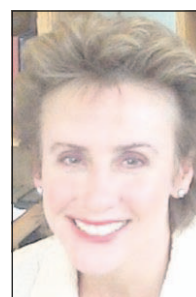
ect in the first place — a fact that was discovered at the commission level after months of project review by Oregon Department of Transportation staff.

Further, when asked, the Port could not show they had the funds in their own coffers to guarantee the required match in absence of Ambre Energy's funding. To compound the problem, the Port claimed their project was "construction ready," but failed to disclose they have a serious operating permit problem with the Division of State Lands that will negate construction start up to a year (a fact that would disqualify the project from being "construction ready" as is required by law).

It seems that no construction at the Port will occur without the Port securing a new proprietary lease from DSL, a process that requires months of review and a full public hearing. This, too, was discovered at commission level.

To exhibit such a reckless disregard for the truth, one can only conclude that the Port either felt they were above the law, should be awarded special treatment, or both.

Consequently, the Port project was denied, but another project was approved at the same time. A Corvallis-to-Albany bike trail project submitted by Benton County proposed a bike trail to be constructed on railroad right-of-way between the two cities. Shortly after ConnectOregon project submittal to ODOT, the county discovered the railroad would deny use of their right-of-way



Catherine M. Mater

for the project, placing the county back at square one for getting the project construction ready.

In response, the county sought private property acquisition for the project by use of eminent domain and the project is now being contested by 100 percent of the farmland owners whose property will be affected. The county failed to disclose the railroad easement denial to the commission at the time of their August decision. As a consequence the project was unanimously approved for \$2 million in public funds — based on misrepresentation of project status.

Both projects are up for reconsideration at the February OTC meeting: the former by heavy political pressure to reverse the August OTC decision to deny project approval at the Port; the latter by citizen demand to revoke project approval from Benton County.

Both are clear examples of an alarming fact: the Oregon Department of Transportation lacks oversight on projects submitted for ConnectOregon funding to ensure against project misrepresentation or project fraud. And, if OTC oversight is exercised, it is ignored or "removed."

It is times like this we all need to be reminded that no one is above the law; no governor; no senator; no government agency; no port.

There's much more unfolding in Oregon transportation funding (in addition to coal concerns) that needs immediate, swift and decisive attention.

*Catherine M. Mater is the immediate past chairwoman of the Oregon Transportation Commission and president of Mater Engineering.*

*The real issue surrounding the story is not coal, it's fraud.*

## Building better secularists

By DAVID BROOKS  
*New York Times News Service*

Over the past few years, there has been a sharp rise in the number of people who are atheist, agnostic or without religious affiliation.

A fifth of all adults and a third of the youngest adults fit into this category.

As secularism becomes more prominent and self-confident, its spokesmen have more insistently argued that secularism should not be seen as an absence — as a lack of faith — but rather as a positive moral creed. Phil Zuckerman, a Pitzer College sociologist, makes this case as fluidly and pleasurably as anybody in his book, *Living the Secular Life*.

Zuckerman argues that secular morality is built around individual reason, individual choice and individual responsibility. Instead of relying on some eye in the sky to tell them what to do, secular people reason their way to proper conduct.

Secular people, he argues, value autonomy over groupthink. They deepen their attachment to this world instead of focusing on a next one. They may not be articulate about why they behave as they do, he argues, but they try their best to follow the Golden Rule, to be considerate and empathetic toward others. "Secular morality hinges upon little else than not harming others and helping those in need," Zuckerman writes.

As he describes them, secularists seem like genial, low-key people who have discarded metaphysical prejudices and are now leading peaceful and rewarding lives. But I can't avoid the conclusion that the secular writers are so eager to make the case for their creed, they are minimizing the strug-

gle required to live by it. Consider the tasks a person would have to perform to live secularism well:

- Secular individuals have to build their own moral philosophies. Religious people inherit creeds that have evolved over centuries. Autonomous secular people are called upon to settle on their own individual sacred convictions.

- Secular individuals have to build their own communities. Religions come equipped with covenantal rituals that bind people together, sacred practices that are beyond individual choice. Secular people have to choose their own communities and come up with their own practices to make them meaningful.

- Secular individuals have to build their own Sabbaths. Religious people are commanded to drop worldly concerns. Secular people have to create their own set times for when to pull back and reflect on spiritual matters.

- Secular people have to fashion their own moral motivation. It's not enough to want to be a decent person. You have to be powerfully motivated to behave well. Religious people are motivated by their love for God and their fervent desire to please Him. Secularists have to come up with their own powerful drive that will compel sacrifice and service.

The point is not that secular people should become religious. You either believe in God or you don't. Neither is the point that religious people are better than secular people. That defies social science evidence and common observation. The point is that an age of mass secularization is an age in which millions of people have put unprecedented moral burdens upon themselves. People who don't know



David Brooks

how to take up these burdens don't turn bad, but they drift. They suffer from a loss of meaning and an unconscious boredom with their own lives.

- One other burden: Past secular creeds were built on the 18th-century enlightenment view of man as an autonomous, rational creature who could reason his way to virtue. The past half-century of cognitive science has shown that creature doesn't exist. We are not really rational animals; emotions play a central role in decision-making, the vast majority of thought is unconscious, and our minds are riddled with biases. We are not really autonomous; our actions are powerfully shaped by others in ways we are not even aware of.

It seems to me that if secularism is going to be a positive creed, it can't just speak to the rational aspects of our nature. Secularism has to do for non-believers what religion does for believers — arouse the higher emotions, exalt the passions in pursuit of moral action. Christianity doesn't rely just on a mild feeling like empathy; it puts agape at the center of life, a fervent and selfless sacrificial love. Judaism doesn't just value community; it values a covenantal community infused with sacred bonds and chosenness that make the heart strings vibrate. Religions don't just ask believers to respect others; rather each soul is worthy of the highest dignity because it radiates divine light.

The only secularism that can really arouse moral motivation and impel action is an enchanted secularism, one that puts emotional relations first and autonomy second. I suspect that over the next years secularism will change its face and become hotter and more consuming, less content with mere benevolence, and more responsive to the spiritual urge in each of us, the drive for purity, self-transcendence and sanctification.

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