

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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The last progressive Republican leaves us

His party left Dave Frohnmayer

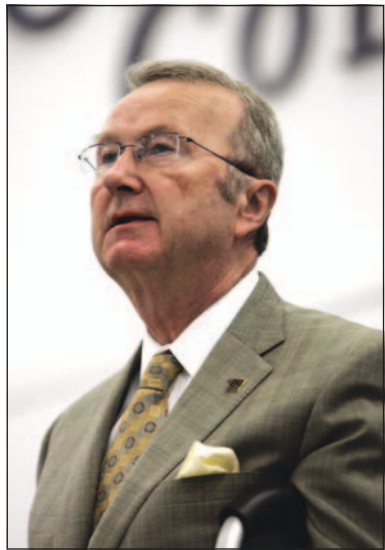
Like the death of Sen. Mark Hatfield, Dave Frohnmayer's passing Monday night reminds us of when Republicans were the mainstream, progressive party of Oregon.

Hatfield and Frohnmayer are an interesting pair, because both retooled universities. Hatfield funneled millions in federal appropriations into the University of Oregon Medical School, making it into the research giant we know as Oregon Health and Sciences University. During his years as president of the University of Oregon, Frohnmayer raised around \$1 billion — a jaw-dropping financial jolt that transformed that institution.

In Frohnmayer's 1990 campaign for governor, one sees the undoing of the Oregon Republican Party. A religion-based Republican splinter candidate Al Mobley took 13 percent of the vote in Frohnmayer's race against Barbara Roberts. We've not had a GOP governor in the 25 years since. No Republican holds statewide office today.

Oregon is poorer because it's a one-party state. We miss the richness of legislative experience that produced landmark legislation such as the Bottle Bill and Senate Bill 100, establishing statewide land use planning.

A less observed aspect of Frohnmayer's legacy was his 10 years as Oregon attorney general. Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis says that legacy was principally two things: "Frohnmayer



Dave Frohnmayer

remade the Criminal Division, making high-quality assistance available to district attorneys. He also created a really elite appellate unit." Arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court, the winning percentage of that unit was very high, with Frohnmayer himself winning six of seven cases.

In describing Dave Frohnmayer and paying tribute to his very consequential life, we find ourselves sounding quaint, using words that are out of fashion in our poisonously partisan public arena. Character is one such word.

Having orcas enriches our lives

Coastal orcas deserve our attention

Having orcas in local waters around the mouth of the Columbia River is old news in a way — fishermen encounter them now and then. But it is news to learn that orcas routinely spend ample periods hunting up and down the Oregon and Washington Coast.

People around Puget Sound and the Salish Sea regard the local J, K and L pods of Southern Resident killer whales sort of like Englishmen view the ravens in the Tower of London: symbols of health and continuity. It is said the kingdom will fall if ever the ravens go away. A similar feeling of protectiveness surrounds the orcas, whose comings, goings, births and deaths are detailed on Seattle TV news and Facebook.

Thanks to NOAA's satellite-tagging program in 2013 and again this winter, for three weeks we were able to trace the swift meanderings of the L pod on the outer coast. Posted several days late — presumably for either technical reasons or to avoid interference from whale enthusiasts — these charts show how many sea miles the orcas can log when there is the potential of a delicious meal off the mouth of the Columbia River or even in Monterey Bay, Calif. (See tinyurl.com/pcstao6)

The Pacific Ocean is orders of magnitude larger than Puget Sound, making it far less likely that average citizens will catch a glimpse of these amazing animals. Even so, fishing boat crews and charter passengers report amazing meetings. This week a retired charter skipper recalled intersecting the course of a pod in waters off Ilwaco, Wash., with one bumping his boat and then lifting itself up to human eye level to take a closer look. This was in late spring — either it was one of the transient

pods that roam around the North Pacific, or else one of the Puget Sound pods made a seasonal trip down the coast, rather like a family of tourists on a quick weekend clam dig.

But just as we find we have these cool seasonal neighbors, we also have to deal with the fact that they aren't doing very well. The L pod may in fact be the most fragile of the three Puget Sound-based whale clans. A baby found swimming with its mother in local waters is a rare example of reproductive success for this aging group, which suffers from a troubling degree of environmental contamination.

Though we don't lack toxin concerns here at the base of a long river system, pollution inside orcas is more likely to originate within the tight confines of Puget Sound. Other threats to orca health, including Navy sonar testing, also deserve more thorough attention than they have received thus far.

There is some pressure to add outer coastal waters to the designated critical habitat for orcas. Before doing so, careful study is essential to make sure crabbers and others who make a living from the ocean aren't crippled by additional regulations. However, a robust orca population might very well begin to rebalance local sea lion numbers, something all fishermen would cheer.

Extinction is one of the most horrifying words in the biological lexicon. Now we know for sure they regard this as part of their home range, we should advocate on behalf of these spectacular and intelligent mammals. An ocean that is productive and welcoming to them will be good for us as well. Having orcas around enriches our lives.

It's time to open another door

Why is it that, when introduced to someone for the first time, the question always pops up: What do you do?

Not: Who are you?

We seem to know people by their occupation. Indeed, we even start thinking of ourselves in terms of how we earn a living rather than what kind of person we are or how we enjoy spending our time.

I've fallen into this trap, too. When I introduce myself at Seaside Downtown Development Association or Seaside Chamber of Commerce meetings, I give a long list of occupations: I'm the editor of the Seaside Signal and the Cannon Beach Gazette and South County reporter for The Daily Astorian.

Whew!

Pretty soon, however, I'll just have one word to introduce myself: Retired.

My retirement on March 20 will, I expect, allow me to become involved in my community instead of being the objective third party. Hopefully, my friends and those who have always known me as the "reporter" or the "editor" or even the "columnist" won't feel that they have to tell me, "This is off the record" or warn others to "be careful of what you say because it will end up in print."

Yes, I do expect to do some freelance writing and maybe even work on projects that need a writer's touch. But I also expect that, as I close the door on this part of my life, another door will open that will allow me to be truly part of the community of volunteers, of activists that I have come to admire.

This is what is so exciting about living on the North Coast: We are a small band of people (I have lived in neighborhoods elsewhere that have larger populations than all of Clatsop County) who get things done. In my eight years here, I have seen huge projects accomplished, all because people here know how to work together. They combine their experience, their intelligence, their connections and their compassion

IMPRESSIONS

By
NANCY
MCCARTHY



into a joint effort, and they move mountains of barriers to accomplish their goals.

I want to be part of that.

What keeps me here — what will keep me here permanently? The people, the beauty, the "family" I have found and the sense of being at home.

There are way too many people I have met through the years and have truly grown fond of to mention here. The difference between living in a big city and living on the North Coast is the amount of care we have for one another. It goes beyond the surface of the brusque "Hi, how're doing?" When people here ask how you are doing, they really want to know.

Although people here may know what's going on in your personal life (no, we aren't above gossiping; it's still a small area, you know), they keep out of it. They let you find your own way, and if they are asked for help, they are always ready and willing to give it.

That's why it has been such a pleasure to be an editor and reporter here for eight years. I've been privileged to observe and chronicle the incredulous, crazy, amazing, thoughtful, fantastic, mind-blowing, gut-wrenching, hysterical and sobering events, issues and people of South Clatsop County — during what I consider the best years of my life.

In this next stage, however, I want to do more than write about it; I want to experience it.

People who know about my impending retirement ask me what I'm going to do. I jokingly tell them I'm

going to "sleep in."

But, in fact, I don't plan to doze through the rest of my life. Yes, I've heard a rumor that there's an ocean to the west of us, and I do plan to catch up on some long overdue beach walks. Maybe now that I won't be sitting in front of a computer for numerous hours a day, I'll get more exercise by hiking along the area's beautiful trails. Casual conversations over coffee with friends in the middle of the afternoon won't be unheard of. Perhaps I can catch up on my reading — without feeling I have to edit every sentence.

But I'm looking forward to finding out what else is out there, how I might put what little talent I have to work for others. As my friends and co-workers will testify, I don't feel comfortable being too lazy for too long.

I admit, it will be wrenching to turn the newspapers over to someone else. They feel like my children.

Every week they start out as a casual list of story ideas, and as the days continue, they are formed and shaped into living stories that are meant to inform, entertain and call to action. They may irritate some readers, satisfy others, spark a laugh or trigger tears, but they are meant to reflect the community that we all have decided to be a part of.

Those stories, however, will be in good hands with reporters Erick Bengel and Katherine Lacaze, who have honed their knowledge about the North Coast and have come to respect those who live here. They will do fine for you.

I never really thought about retirement, but, after 48 years in the newspaper business (I started, of course, when I was 3 years old...), perhaps it's time to try something different.

And when someone asks me what I do, maybe I can tell them who I am, instead, or how I enjoy spending my time.

If nothing else, I can just give them a one word answer: Retired.

Nancy McCarthy is editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette and writes for The Daily Astorian.

Open forum

Outstanding mayor

Re: Dianne Widdop doing a terrific job. I have been involved with the Gearhart Homeowners Association for years. Since she was elected mayor she regularly attends (never misses) our meetings. Usually, at the end of the agenda she brings us up to date on Gearhart — from elk, to the water works, to beach signing — everything we need to know.

I have been impressed. She is positive, enthusiastic, informative and brief. And, she holds the line.

I know one of the issues involves the old barn. The owners want to have events there. But the old barn is too much of an old barn. It is not up to code.

In my experience, Dianne Widdop has been an outstanding mayor of Gearhart. She wants what we want: Keep Gearhart, Gearhart.

GARY W. WHITE
past president, Gearhart Homeowners Association

Iron fisted

In a March 3 Daily Astorian guest editorial, "The Gearhart recall decision," Gearhart Mayor Diane Widdop suggests former City Councilor Joy Sigler shortened a tape of their contentious conversation on Oct. 29, 2014; yet Sigler's full-length recording was posted on the Restore Trust Gearhart website (<http://restoretrust-gearhart.com>) until it was mysteriously replaced with a briefer version which stopped short of the mayor's most shocking statement.

Was this switch the work of a cyber sleuth? Why would Sigler — or anyone seeking the mayor's departure — not share Widdop saying, "Enough with the damned freedom of speech!" There is no veiled innuendo in this pronouncement. Listen to the full recording; it was reposted on the Restore Trust Gearhart website well before Widdop's charge.

Widdop's disrespect for the constitutional cornerstone of our country's democracy must not be taken lightly. Ironically, she had the temerity to seek the protection of that very freedom of speech when she claimed, "It's my constitutional right to say what I want" ("Jesse asks Gearhart mayor to bow out," The Daily Astorian, Jan. 8). Which is it? Does the First Amendment offer precious protection, or is it merely a damnable nuisance when one's actions are questioned?

Supportive letters have been careful not to mention this astonishing gaffe, but rather refer to the alleged fruits of Widdop's leadership. No one disputes the value of guidelines to govern public safety, but the mayor's legacy involves far too many ordinances crafted to create order where there is no chaos.

Widdop's penchant for iron-fisted governance, and her disparagement of our most treasured constitutional protection, have brought her to the brink of recall. This election is not about Harold Gable or any of the 108 registered voters who advanced the recall action. It is about whether or not the people of Gearhart wish to retain a mayor whose bullish behavior in advancing her personal agenda has strayed too far from the standard we deserve from our elected officials.

MICHAEL BIRD
Gearhart

Abuse of power

This recall of Mayor Dianne Widdop is about her two years as mayor. In these two years, she has consistently shown a lack of leadership, disregard for citizens' rights, abuse of power and often, poor judgment.

Widdop refuses to work with the entire city council, instead working with only two of the other four members. These two share her ideas and agenda and it's obvious this will not change until she is recalled. One of these favored council members surprisingly referred to her actions as "stupid." Gearhart deserves much better from its mayor.

Widdop uses the word "we," so she will not be questioned about her unilateral decisions, which blatantly ignore council protocol. Example: Her self-appointment to represent Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR) and her co-signing of a letter suggesting changes in the way Port of Astoria commissioners are chosen.

Mayor Widdop says she is in City Hall every Wednesday to listen to the concerns of residents. When they do not agree with her or her agenda, she has become verbally abusive. Residents told us they feel she is there only for self-promotion.

Mayor Widdop takes credit for the work of others. Example: She did not ask Sen. Jeff Merkley or Rep. Suzanne Bonamici to come

to Gearhart. Checking with their offices, they contacted the city; the same with Larry Galizio, president of Clatsop Community College. He called the city and asked to make a presentation before city council.

We have received threats toward our home, our pets and us. We take them seriously. Is this retaliation?

Residents on the east side of U.S. Highway 101 are being ignored. They want and deserve streetlights and attentive, regular street maintenance, for starters. They are not getting the services they deserve. Widdop has shown no interest in reaching out to these residents. They often expressed frustration and anger when we spoke with them.

In two years as mayor, Widdop has accomplished little. A new noise ordinance that is ineffectual. Recreational vehicle and fence ordinances that still, after one year are not in place. There is more. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

These transgressions are not trivial. They are important. They set the tenor of our city. People are unhappy with Mayor Widdop and her divisive behavior. She is not the victim, but the cause.

The three-ring circus masquerading as a city council that you, Mayor Widdop have created in the past two years needs to play its last performance.

Thank you for your yes vote to restore trust in Gearhart's government.

JANE GABLE
Gearhart

We support Widdop

We have always found Dianne Widdop to be very open and transparent in all her work for the city of Gearhart and the community. Her weekly "open house" at City Hall each Wednesday morning, for any citizen to stop by for a chat and visit, is a class act. What a pleasant invitation to say, "Let's talk."

Her interests are directed strictly for the betterment of Gearhart. She carries no baggage, no hidden interests or personal agendas to City Hall. She is well educated, bright, articulate and professional.

She and her husband, Bob, are welcome anytime into our home. We are proud to support her as our mayor.

MARTY AND JEAN GILL
Gearhart