

Marquis says Russia looks different this time around

Russia is like the world's longest-running soap opera. The themes in the beginning have emerged again and again over centuries. In other words, Russia's czarist roots just keep showing up — through its Communist, Soviet era and into today's oligarchy.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported recently that a Moscow resident maintains his own museum dedicated to sanitizing the image of Ivan the Terrible. The WSJ reported that after visiting the museum, Vladimir Putin told historians: "We need to win minds. When we convince the vast majority of our people that our position is correct, objective and fair, and show that this position benefits our society, country and people, we will gain millions of supporters."

"But some historians in Russia and the West are alarmed because they fear that Russia's often-bloody history is being whitewashed to fuel the Kremlin's nationalist campaign," reported the WSJ.

Russia is like catnip to the historian or even the casual visitor. Its stories are too bizarre. It is not just another foreign country. It has a different aroma, it evokes a different impression than just about anywhere else you might choose to go. After we sold *Willamette Week* in 1977, I traveled abroad and joined a New York City tour in Moscow. We also visited Leningrad (now St. Petersburg).

I was never so eager to leave a place as I was that morning as I boarded an Aeroflot plane in St. Petersburg. When I returned to Portland, friends asked how it was. My response was, "It's a lot like adolescence. I learned a lot, but I don't want to do it again."

So I was intrigued when I reached Josh Marquis on his cellphone in Moscow. Our Clatsop County district attorney and his wife, Astoria City Councilor Cindy Price, returned this week from a trip to Russia.

Here is my interview with them:

What took you Russia?

JOSH MARQUIS: In 1990 I traveled to Helsinki, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Moscow, Kiev and Odessa in the last year of the Soviet Union. I traveled with my father, a longtime political science professor. My wife, has a Russian-speaking American friend living in Moscow. So with the dollar strong, the ruble weak and almost 250,000 air miles, it was a great opportunity.

From your prior visit to now, what changes did you notice?

Enormous change. Russia — Moscow in particular — is a huge wealthy megaci-



CINDY PRICE — For The Daily Astorian
Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis at the state prosecutor's office in Moscow.



JOSH MARQUIS — For The Daily Astorian
The Kazan Kremlin (castle) is the only such citadel with both a working mosque and Christian church. The town was founded in 1005.

ty. There are more newer, fancier cars than in any major U.S. city.

The Russian Orthodox churches are restored and thriving. The famous GUM department store is now a hallway of Gucci and Prada.

A New York Times reporter some months ago rode the train between Moscow and St. Petersburg and observed poverty that resembled our Appalachia, away from the urban centers. Did you see any of that?

Yes, we drove 100 miles out to the "Golden Circle" and the beautiful, ancient town of Suzdal, which has the population same as Portland. The places in between look dilapidated, but not as deserted and

abandoned as the Times article, which I read.

CINDY PRICE: You can see the places that have been left behind economically.

Where else did you travel?

JOSH MARQUIS: Moscow, St Petersburg, Suzdal, and Kazan.

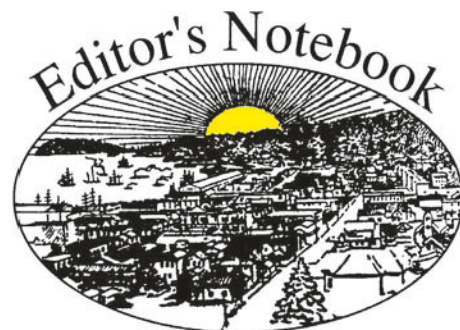
How ironic did you feel, standing in front of the state Prosecutor's building? Did you wonder about what's gone on inside that building?

I'd be fascinated, and I am grateful I do NOT have the sweeping powers of a Russian prosecutor.

Also their system is a top down hierarchy. Ours is one of extreme local (democratic) autonomy.



JOSH MARQUIS — For The Daily Astorian
The Russian Orthodox church in Suzdal.



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Cindy, what was your dominant impression?

CINDY PRICE: Russia is not the country we grew up knowing about and planning against. But Russia Today (the cable channel) wants it to be that country — the superpower — and if the economy tanks further, it could be again.

The Russians love Putin's tough talk. They don't want Communism back, but they do want to be a superpower. They're willing to accept all of these repressions if they can retain their economic vitality.

Unlike when I was there in 1990, there was not the sense that I was being watched all the time. There is no sense that the government is watching you.

What is an indelible memory you take away?

JOSH MARQUIS: I found Russian people very warm and friendly, curious yet knowledgeable about American brands from Coca-Cola (and Pepsi here since the '70s because Nixon's brother had the franchise) to Ford (police cars) and American slogans and music.

One day we were eating lunch overlooking Kazan Cathedral in St Petersburg at a relatively fancy Japanese/Italian restaurant when a well-dressed Russian at the next table asked if we were Americans. We said yes, gave him our business cards (no tax money was spent on this trip) and he assured us that relations — strained over Crimea and Ukraine — would improve.

We toasted friendship of all people.
—S.A.F.

Open forum

Leave birds alone

Object to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers using my tax money to abuse animals. The double-crested cormorants on East Sand Island are indigenous to the mouth of the Columbia River. They belong here.

East Sand Island will limit their numbers through the natural limitation of space. The cormorants are just making their own comeback after being devastated by the use of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT). They have increased from 100 breeding pairs in 1989 to about 15,000 breeding pairs in our area. Our region has the largest colony in western North America, representing over 40 percent of the cormorant population.

The Audubon Society has designated East Sand Island as a bird destination, bringing thousands of visitors worldwide to view these birds. This brings money into our area.

These are shy birds, who need to be left in peace to rebuild their species. The Corps of Engineers have already moved the birds from one side of the island to the other with hazing. The poor, desperate birds have tried to cooperate.

Now the Corps of Engineers wants to wait until after the birds build their nests in April, then go on the island and kill chicks, oil eggs and kill thousands of the adult birds to manage (aka kill) the population down to where they won't eat as many baby salmon.

This is cruel and barbaric. This is animal abuse. It is also unnecessary. Their impact at the mouth of the Columbia River is insignificant. Salmon and steelhead are only a small part of their diet. Upwelling conditions in the ocean determines the salmon return, not bird predation.

We're now up to 12 percent of the ancient abundance with salmon recov-

ery efforts. Habitat restoration, dam removals or modifications for fish benefit, securing conservation land, marine reserves, reducing river and ocean pollution and developing sustainable fisheries are what is bringing the salmon and steelhead back.

The Corps of Engineers is afraid of birds expanding to the other island, and birds nesting in the bridge. The cormorants are uncomfortable around any sort of moving light, even a laser pointer. Just rig moving lights on the bridge and island.

The other problem is that young salmon have to mill around for a few months in one spot at the mouth of the river to adapt to salt water. Efforts to haze the birds from boats over the salmon area are having some success in reducing the take. The take is insignificant, anyway.

The cormorants are not being a significant impact on the salmon or steel-

head. They, unlike humans, are only taking what they need. They benefit our economy. They are indigenous to the Columbia River. They belong here. Leave the cormorants alone.

MOLLIE BERK
Astoria

Your dog, your bags

This letter is in response to the gentleman who was complaining to the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department that their dog waste bags were too small ("Sad sacks," *The Daily Astorian*, March 27). There's a very easy solution to your problem. Buy your own bags and be responsible for your own dog.

The Parks Department, whose resources are already stretched thin, provides the dog waste bags as a courtesy to dog owners who may need a bag in an emergency. They are not in the

business of buying your waste bags. Dogs are members of our family, like a child brought into the world. They didn't ask to be here. You provide for them until the time comes when they leave.

By the way, if your dog's poop, as you say, is so big, he must be a fairly large dog. Bet he eats a lot, too. If you can afford the food, you can afford the bags. I get mine on Amazon, 50 20-bag rolls, 9 inches by 12 inches, \$16. With a dispenser.

This letter is also for all dog owners who let their dogs relieve themselves and leave without picking it up. Do us — by that, I mean all owners who do clean up their dogs' business — a favor. Dog poop is disgusting enough to pick up, but we do, because we love Riverwalk and want to keep it clean. Please, if your dog does it, pick it up.

KEN MARSHALL
Warrenton



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