

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



STEPHEN A. FORRESTER, *Editor & Publisher*

LAURA SELLERS, *Managing Editor*

BETTY SMITH, *Advertising Manager*

CARL EARL, *Systems Manager*

JOHN D. BRUIJN, *Production Manager*

DEBRA BLOOM, *Business Manager*

SAMANTHA MCLAREN, *Circulation Manager*

Better for residents, attractive to visitors

There's a message in local museums' phenomenal visitor growth

Some 25 years ago many Astorians questioned whether they wanted the place to be a tourist town. In some ways, it was a needless question. With a world-class maritime museum, with Lewis and Clark's winter 1804-1805 home nearby and with the junction of a great river and the Pacific Ocean, tourists were coming. But Astoria in 1990 lacked great places to stay and eat.

Kyle Spurr has reported that visitor numbers at the Columbia River Maritime Museum, Clatsop County Historical Society museums and Lewis and Clark National Historical Park are "through the roof." All of those attractions have shown significant gains this year.

Each of these places has been enhanced over the past decade. For the Lewis and Clark bicentennial in 2004-05, two things happened. Congress enlarged Fort Clatsop's boundaries and its scope to include significant sites on Washington's riverfront. And the park created the Fort to Sea Trail. As Park Superintendent Scott Tucker told Spurr, local visitor count is up considerably, because of the park's trails system.

The Maritime Museum underwent a major refurbishing and expansion in 2002. Since its re-opening that year, the museum has attracted more than 1.1 million visitors, a phenomenal outcome.

The county Historical Society has created a new attraction in the Oregon Film Museum. Executive Director McAndrew Burns noted this small museum has had an outsized impact. Housed in the former county jail — which appears in the movie *The Goonies* — the film museum has become a cult attraction. Assuredly it will be swamped during the June festivities marking the 30th anniversary of the release of *The Goonies*.

When some Astorians resisted the notion of becoming a tourist town, they conjured images of a place that would lose its innate charm. But the best truism is that if you make a place more comfortable for its residents, visitors also will find it more attractive. That's exactly what's happened in Astoria. The new hotels and restaurants, the Riverwalk and amenities such as the Fort to Sea Trail make this place a better home and visitor magnet.

Healthier airport makes for a stronger local society

In this place of ports and boats, it can seem irregular to consider the importance of airport, airplanes and flying skills. Our stories last week drive home the point that the Astoria Regional Airport is, if anything, gaining in importance and that a cadre of area citizens has a renewed passion for civil aviation.

Although our area has struggled without lasting success to keep a commuter airline interested in serving local passengers, there clearly are a number of other perfectly viable economic and strategic uses for a significant airport. The relocation of the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River command structure to the mouth of the Columbia is one of the most obvious reasons for the airport's relevancy, but the Columbia River Bar Pilots, Lektro, Brim Aviation, UPS and others also see it as key to their ability to serve local customers and community needs.

Most likely thanks to the Coast Guard component of airport use, the Federal Aviation Administration is being particularly helpful in facilitating a thorough reconstruction of the airport's Runway 13-31, to the tune of \$4.6 million, plus a very welcome \$480,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation. As a consequence, airport owner Port of Astoria will get a first-class runway for as little as \$30,000. This is still a painful expense considering the Port's financial straits, but irresistible considering the benefits.

Along with the airport's other runway, 8-26, which was recently redone, we'll have sufficient capacity to receive planes as large as Boeing 737s in a variety of weather and wind conditions. It's probably safe to say that the recent talk of scheduling 747 stops here will not come to pass, the

airliners we will be able to accommodate will make the airport a viable stop for air cargo, military flights and an array of other functions.

It's also encouraging to see local people endeavor to keep the American tradition of civil aviation alive. The new Astoria Flying Club harkens back to traditions of the mid-20th century, when there was an active dream of making small, private airplanes nearly as ubiquitous as cars and pickups.

In more recent times, the complications and distractions of modern life along with factors like higher insurance costs have eroded interest in learning to fly light planes. But there remains an enthusiastic group of private pilots in both Clatsop and Pacific, Wash., counties who fly for fun, commute to jobs elsewhere in the region and sometimes find ways to turn their flying skills into a little income on everything from aerial photography to sightseeing jaunts.

Flying small planes can be a tremendously effective way of interesting young people in careers in aviation and at the same time imparts a working knowledge of everything from meteorology and mechanics to electronics and practical math. As one local pilot remarked for our story, flying can generate a kind of spiritual serenity for participants — an enhanced awareness of the natural world that percolates through society. Some might go so far as to say that a nation that flies together stays together.

We're fortunate to have an increasingly healthy airport, one that links us to the Pacific Northwest interior in ways that are profitable and, looking ahead to natural disasters, reassuring.

A tribute to dispatchers

The second full week in April is designated as National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week.

In appreciation for all that the dispatchers in this county do for the public, I would like to share a Tribute to Dispatchers as penned by Chief Thomas Wagoner from the Loveland, Colo., Police Department.

I would also like to personally thank each of you for the job you do day in and day out, every day. You all are an amazing and talented group!

— Jeff Rusiecki
Emergency Communications manager, city of Astoria 911

A Tribute To Dispatchers:

Someone once asked me if I thought that answering telephones for a living was a profession. I said, "I thought it was a calling."

And so is dispatching. I have found in my law enforcement career that dispatchers are the unsung heroes of public safety. They miss the excitement of riding in a speeding car with lights flashing and sirens wailing. They can only hear of the bright orange flames leaping from a burning building. They do not get to see the joy on the face of worried parents as they see their child begin breathing on its own, after it has been given CPR.

Dispatchers sit in darkened rooms looking at computer screens and talking to voices from faces they never see. "It's like reading a lot of books, but only half of each one."

Dispatchers connect the anxious conversations of terrified victims, angry informants, suicidal citizens and grouchy officers. They are the calming influence of all of them — the quiet, competent voices in the night that provide the pillars for the bridges of sanity and safety. They are expected to gather information from highly agitated people who can't re-

Dispatchers are expected to be able to do five things at once.

member where they live, what their name is, or what they just saw. And then, they're to calmly provide all that information to the officers, firefighters or paramedics without error the first time and every time.

Dispatchers are expected to be able to do five things at once — and do them well. While questioning a frantic caller, they must type the information into a computer, tip off another dispatcher, put another caller on hold, and listen to an officer run a plate for a parking problem. To miss the plate numbers is to raise the officer's ire; to miss the caller's information may be to endanger the same officer's life. But, the officer will never understand that.

Dispatchers have two constant companions, other dispatchers and stress. They depend on one, and try to ignore the other. They are chastened by upset callers, taken for granted by the public and criticized by the officers. The rewards they get are inexpensive and infrequent, except for the satisfaction they feel at the end of a shift, having done what they were expected to do.

Dispatchers come in all shapes and sizes, all races, both sexes and all ages. They are blondes, and brunettes and redheads. They are quiet and outgoing, single or married, plain, beautiful or handsome. No two are alike, yet they are all the same.

They are people who were selected in a difficult hiring process to do an impossible job. They are as different as snowflakes, but they have one thing in common. They care about people and they enjoy being the lifeline of society — that steady voice in a storm — the one who knows how to handle every emergency and does it with style and grace; and, uncompromised competence.

Dispatchers play many roles: therapist, doctor, lawyer, teacher, weatherman, guidance counselor, psychologist, priest, secretary, su-

pervisor, politician and reporter. And few people must jump through the emotional hoops on the trip through the joy of one caller's birthday party, to the fear of another caller's burglary in progress, to the anger of a neighbor blocked in their drive, and back to the birthday caller all in a two-minute time frame. The emotional roller coaster rolls to a stop after an eight- or 10-hour shift, and they are expected to walk down to their car with steady feet and no queasiness in their stomach, because they are dispatchers. If they hold it in, they are too closed. If they talk about it, they are a whiner. If it bothers them, it adds more stress. If it doesn't, they question themselves, wondering why.

Dispatchers are expected to have:

- the wisdom of Solomon
- the interviewing skills of Oprah Winfrey
- the gentleness of Florence Nightingale
- the patience of Job
- the voice of Barbara Streisand
- the knowledge of Einstein
- the answers of Ann Landers
- the humor of David Letterman
- the investigative skills of Sgt. Joe Friday

- the looks of Melanie Griffith or Don Johnson
- the faith of Billy Graham
- the energy of Charo
- and the endurance of the Energizer Bunny

Is it any wonder that many drop out during training? It is a unique and talented person who can do this job and do it well. And, it is fitting and proper that we take a few minutes or hours this week to honor you for the job that each of you do. That recognition is overdue and it is insufficient. But, it is sincere.

I have tried to do your job, and I have failed. It takes a special person with unique skills. I admire you and I thank you for the thankless job you do. You are heroes, and I am proud to work with you.

— Chief Thomas Wagoner from the Loveland, Colo., Police Department, 1994.

Remains from Lincoln's last day

By TIMOTHY EGAN

New York Times News Service

Imagine him in the last week of his life, 150 years ago this month.

Shuffling, clothes hanging loosely on the 6-foot-4-inch frame, that tinny voice, a face much older than someone of 56.

"I am a tired man," he said. "Sometimes I think I am the tireddest man on earth."

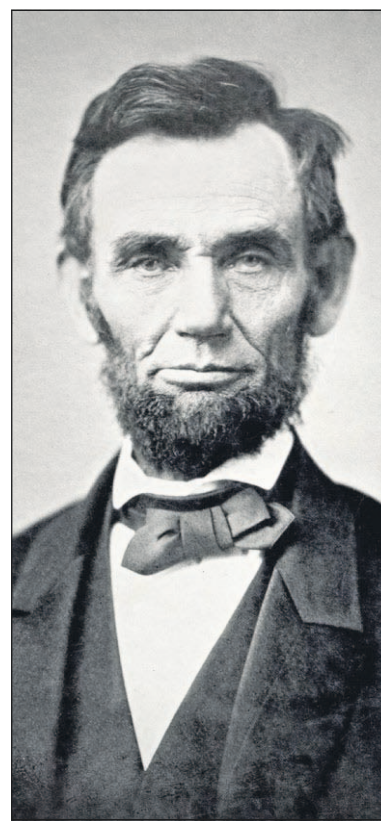
Springtime in Washington, lilacs starting to flower. The Capitol Dome finally free of its scaffolding. His month began in triumph against the largest slaveholding nation on earth. Richmond fell and was set afire by its retreating residents. On April 4, Abraham Lincoln, with his 12-year-old son, Tad — his birthday! — walked the smoldering shell of the rebel capital, walked a mile or so, pressed by a throng of liberated blacks, to sit as a conqueror in the seat of the Southern White House.

"No day ever dawns for the slave," wrote a man who had once been owned by a fellow man. In Richmond, thereafter, all days had dawns.

On the dawn of his final day, April 14, Lincoln rises as usual at 7 a.m., breakfasts on coffee and an egg. He meets with his cabinet, confers with an ex-slave, lunches with the unpredictable Mary Todd. They have plans to attend "Our American Cousin." In the box at Ford's Theater that evening, a white supremacist fires a single shot from a Derringer. The bullet penetrates Lincoln's brain and lodges just behind his right eye. The most significant casualty in a war that took more lives than any other in the nation's history dies the next morning — the first president to be murdered.

Now think of the legacy on this anniversary of the American passion play. Think of free land for the landless, the transcontinental railroad, the seeding of what would grow into national parks, the granting of human rights to people who had none.

And think of how much the party of Lincoln has turned against



Think of how much the party of Lincoln has turned against the expansive political philosophy of Lincoln.

the expansive political philosophy of Lincoln. Not the emancipation of 4 million people — Northern Democrats who died on Southern battlegrounds, and certainly the Republicans who held power then, get their share of credit for ending the Original Sin of the United States.

But beyond: Could the Republicans who control Congress in 2015, the party of no, ever pass a Homestead Act? That law, which went into effect the very day, Jan. 1, 1863, Lincoln's wartime executive order to free slaves in the breakaway states did, carries a clause that very few Republicans would support now.

Former slaves, famine Irish, Russian Jews, single women, Mexicans who didn't speak a word of English — all qualified to claim 160 acres as their own. You didn't have to be a citizen to get your quarter-square-mile. You just had to intend to become a citizen.

In that sense, the Homestead Act was the Dream Act of today. It had a path to citizenship and prosperity for those in this country who were neither citizens nor prosperous.

Consider the vision to stitch a railroad from east to west, an enormous tangle of infrastructure. In 1862, Lincoln signed legislation spurring construction of the transcontinental railroad. That same year, he approved a bill that led to the creation of land grant colleges.

Today, Congress will not even approve enough money to keep decrepit bridges from falling down, and has whittled away funds to help working kids stay in college. It's laughable to think of Republicans' approving of something visionary and forward-looking in the realm of transportation, energy or education. Government, in their minds, can never be a force for good.

In 1864, Lincoln signed a bill that allowed California to protect the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of giant Sequoias — wild land that would eventually become part of the National Park system. Republicans of today are openly hostile to conservation, a largely Republican idea.

The great, nation-shaping accomplishments of Lincoln's day happened only because the South, always with an eye on protecting slavery and an estate-owning aristocracy, had left the union — riding Congress of the naysayers.

Today, the South is solidly Republican and solidly obstructionist. The party is also solidly white. No, they're not slave-apologists, though many fail to recognize the active, toxic legacy of the Confederacy. And no, their insults of President Obama — calling him a king, an incompetent, an outsider, echoing some of the slights against Lincoln — do not in any way make Obama the Lincoln of today.

But you can say this with certainty: what unites the Republican Party, on this 150th anniversary of the murder of Lincoln, is that they are against the type of progressive legislation that gave rise to their party. Lincoln is an oil painting in the parlor, to be dusted off while Republican leaders plot new ways to kill things that he would have approved of.

Nothing in politics is static. Things will change. Party philosophies will flip, new alliances will emerge. What we know for sure again comes from Lincoln: "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history."