

# 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*  
 HEATHER RAMSDELL, *Circulation Manager*

## Hectic weekend highlights strains of popularity

*Our area needs help dealing with summer congestion*

Independence Day has always been hectic in the seashore towns of the Pacific Northwest, but this past weekend was memorable for extraordinary crowds, eye-popping traffic and (mostly) manageable disorder.

On the positive side of the cost-benefit equation, the long holiday recharged local bank accounts, generated fat tips for restaurant servers and provided much enthusiastic energy that reverberated along U.S. Highway 101 and Columbia-Pacific beaches. The Fourth of July is supposed to be a celebration and our area played host to a giant party that ended happily for the vast majority of attendees and hosts.

It is a party with an open-ended invitation to millions who live along the crowded and sweltering Interstate 5 corridor. This presents special challenges for communities that are fundamentally built to serve a year-round population of about 50,000 in Clatsop and Pacific counties. With the notable exception of national and state parks that are maintained with visitors in mind, infrastructure is built to serve the permanent population. Certainly, a considerable cushion has been added to the power grid, water and sewer utilities and major highways. But this cushion's limits are being seriously tested by tens of thousands of tourists arriving in increasing numbers in the past couple years.

In Clatsop County, a transformer substation in Seaside failed at an awful time — late afternoon until 10:30 p.m. on the 4th. Residents deal with power outages in far worse circumstances, such as raging winter storms, but loss of electricity on July 4 was a logistical and economic pain.

In Washington's Pacific County, conflicting messages about fireworks and campfires — particularly within the city of Long Beach — set up a scenario that could have been disas-

trous. With conditions already resembling a dry September, Long Beach's ingrained attitude of letting things take their own course out on the beach requires serious re-examination. Near-chaos wasn't confined to Long Beach. State beaches in both counties are in need of better law-enforcement strategies at all times. At predictable times like July 4, state governments must step up and provide additional help to local fire and police personnel, who are stretched to their limits.

In both counties, trip times were doubled and tripled by traffic that reached gridlock at multiple times in numerous places. Long, skinny bridges and winding two-lane roads are part of the charm of this place. But what is scenic and charming in normal circumstances becomes frustrating and even dangerous when tempers become overheated and emergency responders find it difficult to respond to calls.

There are no quick or inexpensive fixes. It will be difficult to find funds for major steps like bypasses around the congested downtowns of Astoria and Seaside. In the meantime, we must apply additional transportation expertise to these situations. Would better signs help a little? Can we somehow communicate the desirability of planning more trips before or after obvious periods of congestion? Can town residents stomach temporary bypasses on alternate streets?

After the forced hiatus of the recession, the coast clearly needs help dealing with a surging tide of welcome popularity. Preserving our quality of life requires smart and proactive action.

## All about the West for eastern consumption

*'A bold act of risk' defines why the West stays the West*

When Eastern publications re-discover the West, we often usually expect to see our dark side. It is often a dubious gift to have the attention of a writer from *The New Yorker* or *The New York Times*.

Astoria has nothing to complain about. It has received more than its share of flattering attention in national media. But much of the inland and intermountain West is barely understood by Eastern writers.

*The Times* has begun a series called Assignment tAmerica. Its author is Kirk Johnson, who identifies himself as a native westerner who went away and returned. He is based in Seattle.

Johnson's weekend article is about Sandpoint, Idaho. Johnson asked the question of why people stay in Sandpoint. He's asked the question in other western towns. What does he hear?

"The common thread over and over? A bold act of risk. If movement was the tidal surge that filled the West with hopefuls, then the laying down of a wager after that — trying something new rather than moving again — was the illusive force that kept them. And then they kept betting, through losses and long odds that chased others off."

It is a useful question. But it also begs a question the Eastern press never asks. Why do people *stay* in the East and never come West?

One way of defining American history would be the division between the people who went West and those who shied away from the risk.

In talking about Sandpoint, or any other western town that is making it against the odds, one eventually looks at the new technology that allows professionals to be anywhere. Those kinds of people — many who abandoned congested places such as Seattle or the East — bring new energy to small western towns. That is a lot of what has turned Astoria around.

There is a Western ethos, and it can be seen historically. Western states gave women the right to vote ahead of the nation. Of the relatively few women who are immortalized in Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol, all are from the West.

Another way of defining the difference between East and West is that the Eastern states still look to Europe, while Western states such as Oregon and Washington are far more linked to Asia.

Good luck to Mr. Johnson. And then we'll await the *Times* series on small burned out Eastern towns that aren't turning the corner.

# Seattle on the Mediterranean

By TIMOTHY EGAN  
*New York Times News Service*

Oh, the ceaseless Seattle sun. June just set another record — the hottest ever recorded in this city, closing out the warmest first half of a year.

Seattle is farther north than Maine and Montreal, and yet, over the past month or so, it's been hotter here than in Athens, Rome or Los Angeles on many a day.

We had eight days at 85 degrees or higher in June. On Sunday, east of the Cascade Mountains, it hit 113 degrees in Walla Walla.

London and Paris, two cities with a climate similar to Seattle's, both set heat records this week — 98, the hottest July day in British history, and 103.5 in the City of Light.

As a native Seattleite, I've always wondered what it would be like to live in a place where it's sunny every day. Now that I'm experiencing something close to that, I feel out of sorts in a strange land. Wildfires burn today in the Olympic Mountains west of Seattle, a forest zone that is typically one of the rainiest places on earth.

Sure, my backyard grapes, my tomatoes, my Meyer lemons and my rosemary plants love it. This is Sicily in Seattle, with nearly 16 hours of daylight. June, known for its cloudy gloom, was "probably the sunniest month in Northwest history," wrote University of Washington atmospheric scientist Cliff Mass on his weather blog.

The experts, Mass among them, do not think the broiling of the Pacific Northwest can be attributed to climate change. Rather, they credit a huge dome of high pressure to the west and warm ocean temperatures. But they say that what we've experienced over the past 16 months is an indication of what this part of the world will be like after the Earth has warmed by several degrees.

So, what's not to like? For starters, brown does not fit an emerald city. Not just every homeowner's lawn, now the color of a baked potato, but alpine meadows, fields and deciduous trees that have given up for the year, shedding potato-chip crisp leaves as if it were October.

As anyone in California could say, get used to it. Or get a fake lawn. Or



Timothy Egan



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

Kevin Pinnell, second from right, shows that people in Seattle don't just need umbrellas during the rainy season as he stands under his for shade from the sun while selling balloon creations to visitors to the Space Needle in Seattle July 1. From Seattle to Salt Lake City, the West is baking under record heat.

grow cactus plants. Summers in the Northwest are usually dry, mild and humidity-free — this is just an extreme version. Stop complaining.

In the withering heat, I can still look south and see the glaciers of Mount Rainier, holding the frozen legacy of winters long past. Water, as snow or ice, is not just the master architect of the Northwest but the main reason the islands, the mountains, the forests of this place are so beautiful.

Take away the snow and change happens quickly. Salmon need cold water. Cherries, apples, peaches, wine grapes — all of which the Northwest grows in abundance — need that snow-melt as well. In mid-May, a statewide drought emergency was declared, after the snowpack in the Cascades was measured at its lowest level in 64 years.

Ahead, we could face major wildfires, in places where 500-year-old trees are draped with tendrils of green. Salmon-spawning rivers could be shallow and warm in early fall — lethal to this region's iconic symbol.

Here, at least, it's fish and trees that are stressed. Elsewhere, it's people. More than 1,000 people died in Pakistan last month in one of the deadliest heat waves in history.

All of this has made me curse Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., who calls the global scientific consensus on climate change "the greatest hoax." And sadly, it matters what he says, because Inhofe

chairs the Senate committee in charge of doing something about climate change. As such, he's determined to prevent the world's second biggest producer of carbon dioxide — the United States — from doing anything.

Inhofe is famous for bringing a snowball to the floor of the Senate to prove his point. What he proved is that there are Labradors with more common sense than a senator with a peanut for a brain.

At the other end of the spectrum is Pope Francis. In his recent encyclical on climate change, he made a plea to our better angels, a plea to take "care of our common home." It's a nice sentiment, but with people like Inhofe guiding U.S. policy, altruism alone will never work.

We need to act out of self-interest, as well. I love my little patch of the planet. Love the glaciers in August, the rivers at full flush, carpets of evergreen trees and a predominant breeze from Puget Sound that provides natural air-conditioning for more than 3 million people in the Seattle area.

We may lose this. The current heat is a precursor, an early peek at a scary tomorrow. Inhofe's ignorance could have a direct effect on the place we leave our grandchildren.

Before giving in to a future in which the Pacific Northwest bakes, burns and shrivels, we have to defend the natural world — place by place.

**Brown does not fit an emerald city.**

## Bringing an end to Greece's bleeding

By PAUL KRUGMAN  
*New York Times News Service*

Europe dodged a bullet on Sunday. Confounding many predictions, Greek voters strongly supported their government's rejection of creditor demands.

And even the most ardent supporters of European union should be breathing a sigh of relief.

Of course, that's not the way the creditors would have you see it. Their story, echoed by many in the business press, is that the failure of their attempt to bully Greece into acquiescence was a triumph of irrationality and irresponsibility over sound technocratic advice.

But the campaign of bullying — the attempt to terrify Greeks by cutting off bank financing and threatening general chaos, all with the almost open goal of pushing the current leftist government out of office — was a shameful moment in a Europe that claims to believe in democratic principles. It would have set a terrible precedent if that campaign had succeeded, even if the creditors were making sense.

What's more, they weren't. The truth is that Europe's self-styled technocrats are like medieval doctors who insisted on bleeding their patients — and when their treatment made the patients sicker, demanded even more bleeding. A "yes" vote in Greece would have condemned the country to years more of suffering under policies that haven't worked and in fact, given the arithmetic, can't work: Austerity probably shrinks the economy faster than it reduces debt, so that all the suffering serves no purpose. The landslide victory of the "no" side offers at



Paul Krugman

least a chance for an escape from this trap.

But how can such an escape be managed? Is there any way for Greece to remain in the euro? And is this desirable in any case?

The most immediate question involves Greek banks. In advance of the referendum, the European Central Bank cut off their access to additional funds, helping to precipitate panic and force the government to impose a bank holiday and capital controls. The central bank now faces an awkward choice: If it resumes normal financing it will as much as admit that the previous freeze was political, but if it doesn't it will effectively force Greece into introducing a new currency.

Specifically, if the money doesn't start flowing from Frankfurt (the headquarters of the central bank), Greece will have no choice but to start paying wages and pensions with IOUs, which will de facto be a parallel currency — and which might soon turn into the new drachma.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the central bank does resume normal lending, and the banking crisis eases. That still leaves the question of how to restore economic growth.

In the failed negotiations that led up to Sunday's referendum, the central sticking point was Greece's demand for permanent debt relief, to remove the cloud hanging over its economy. The troika — the institutions representing creditor interests — refused, even though we now know that one member of the troika, the International Monetary Fund, had concluded independently that Greece's debt cannot be paid. But will they reconsider now that the attempt to drive the governing leftist coalition from office has failed?

I have no idea — and in any case there is now a strong argu-

ment that Greek exit from the euro is the best of bad options.

Imagine, for a moment, that Greece had never adopted the euro, that it had merely fixed the value of the drachma in terms of euros. What would basic economic analysis say it should do now? The answer, overwhelmingly, would be that it should devalue — let the drachma's value drop, both to encourage exports and to break out of the cycle of deflation.

Of course, Greece no longer has its own currency, and many analysts used to claim that adopting the euro was an irreversible move — after all, any hint of euro exit would set off devastating bank runs and a financial crisis. But at this point that financial crisis has already happened, so that the biggest costs of euro exit have been paid. Why, then, not go for the benefits?

Would Greek exit from the euro work as well as Iceland's highly successful devaluation in 2008-09, or Argentina's abandonment of its one-peso-one-dollar policy in 2001-02? Maybe not — but consider the alternatives. Unless Greece receives really major debt relief, and possibly even then, leaving the euro offers the only plausible escape route from its endless economic nightmare.

And let's be clear: If Greece ends up leaving the euro, it won't mean that the Greeks are bad Europeans. Greece's debt problem reflected irresponsible lending as well as irresponsible borrowing, and in any case the Greeks have paid for their government's sins many times over. If they can't make a go of Europe's common currency, it's because that common currency offers no respite for countries in trouble. The important thing now is to do whatever it takes to end the bleeding.

**The most immediate question involves Greek banks.**