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'Nature does the teaching'

If we do not rediscover the Earth, our successors will suffer

The cover of today's *Coast Weekend* is priceless. A father hangs on to his son, who is extended — fishing net in hand — over a Seaside pond. The image captured by Josh Bessex is the antithesis of an era in which technology devours some children.

Much has been written about the detriment of children missing the outdoor experience. One writer has dubbed this phenomenon a "nature deficit disorder." This is the season for reconnecting with nature. No region makes it easier than ours.

McKinley Smith's Tuesday feature on Clatsop Community College's Upward Bound Summer Academy is all about nature's teaching power. Lee Cain, who leads the project said: "I don't have to do much. Nature does the teaching." During the school year, Cain teaches a renowned salmon biology class at Astoria High School.

The *Coast Weekend* cover feature is about the North Coast Land Conservancy's nature-based programs for children and adults. The NCLC is devoted to preserving coherent elements of the coastal

ecosystem. But it does not treat these properties like a museum or solely as a land bank. It uses these parcels to help the rest of us connect with nature. The *CW* article contains a schedule of the conservancy's seasonal programs.

America's long affection for the land has been evoked by a succession of writers. Henry David Thoreau is the icon of nature writing. The transcendentalism that Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson fostered in the 19th century resonates today. In his recent encyclical — a plea for the Earth — Pope Francis made reference to society's unhealthy diversion away from the environment.

Another way of looking at Francis' teaching document is that if we do not rediscover the Earth and treat it better, our successors will suffer badly. We are the ultimate endangered species.

Bring Tourist No. 2 home

Puget Sound lost a significant part of its maritime history this January when the badly derelict ferry Kalakala was demolished following decades of neglect and unsuccessful restoration efforts.

Now, Columbia River communities may have a chance to regain our connection with the more modest and savable Tourist No. 2 ferry.

Robert "Jake" Jacob, the major owner of the Cannery Pier Hotel and thus a man with a tested commitment to strengthening our ties with the Columbia, arranged for the Tourist No. 2's owner, Capt. Christian Lint, to bring the ferry back from Bremerton, Wash., to Astoria. Lint has been trying to find a credible entity to take on stewardship of the old vessel.

For generations, transportation between Columbia estuary settlements was by watercraft. To the Chinookan tribes on this immense body of water — virtually an inland sea — the estuary wasn't a barrier, but a safe and friendly highway/business place/playground. They scooted around it at will. For decades following white settlement, ferries, riverboats and personal vessels followed this ancient pattern of uniting isolated river villages via the water.

Great Depression-era infrastructure spending jump-started highway connections among communities along the two shores. But the ferry system between the foot of 14th Street in Astoria and the north shore terminal in Megler remained the only practical way to get across

the estuary between the two states, until the bridge was finished in 1966.

The bridge transformed life in Clatsop and Pacific counties. No longer did a trip back and forth require careful timing.

Nearly a half century after its construction, we are still in the process of fully integrating business and personal life between the two shores. Nobody here would relish going back to having to depend on ferries.

There remains, however, great nostalgia for the ferryboat era, when anyone with 25 cents for a passenger ticket could have a voyage across the Great River of the West, tasting the salt spray and getting close-up views of working fishermen and wildlife. It was an inconvenient, but incredibly rich, experience.

Reading comments to our story about Tourist No. 2's pending visit make it clear there is much interest in finding a way to keep it on the estuary. It would be good to explore and possibly create a long-term purpose and funding stream for the vessel, something that would get people back out onto the Columbia's waters in greater numbers.

This will be tricky. Everyone knows the old saying that "Boats are holes in the water, into which you throw money." Running a historic ferry would be more expensive and challenging than operating the riverfront trolley.

Even so, in a distinctly maritime community, it is terrifically tempting to try to find some practical way to bring this old boat back into the family.

Communities need 'skin in the game'

We need to address quake realities in our coast schools

One aspect of the tsunami threat is undeniable. Kids in our schools are at risk.

The Oregon Coast can anticipate an earthquake offshore will generate a tsunami similar to the March 2011 earthquake in Japan.

The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries — DOGAMI, rhymes with "tsunami" — offers inundation maps that show whole "downtown areas of Cannon Beach and Seaside as being prone to complete inundation."

Last month, Seaside School District Superintendent Doug Dougherty said the district is considering a new bond to move Seaside schools — Broadway Middle School, Seaside High School and Gearheart Elementary School — to safer ground. It was tried in 2013 to the tune of \$128.8 million, and soundly defeated by voters.

The physical threat remains the catalyst: "There are four schools along the Oregon Coast in the inundation zone, and we have three of those," Dougherty said. "Our goal is to have students out of every one of these schools as soon as possible."

Dougherty said he expects a bond to be presented within a year and a half or later, because the economy here "has not fully bounced back." In addition, the district still has to pass a local option levy in November to maintain staffing levels.

Since two initiatives, one to replace school buildings and one to maintain staffing, are unlikely to pass in one year, the clock will have to wait on needed safety measures, or "physical retrofits," as government officials call them.

Same issue, new bond, only three years later? Sell that to voters. Many Cannon Beach residents are still miffed at the way Cannon Beach Elementary School was shuttered.

Before all the horses and all the king's men have to put Humpty-Dumpty together again, citizens, civic leaders and government officials of good faith must work together so the next bond won't be a failure. Planning should begin now.

At a breakfast meeting of the Seaside Downtown Development Association July 9, state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, responded to an audience member who asked how the district

CANNON SHOTS

By R.J. MARX



could replace Seaside's schools without breaking taxpayers' backs.

"We need to move our high school and middle school up to a safer location," Johnson said. "On the face, it seems so simple: Get our kids out of danger. But it is actually a very complex question."

"Part of the problem is, it's not as easy as 'let's move the school,'" Johnson said. "Seaside has a two-part whammy. When your last bond failed so dramatically, you didn't have property or site control, and the site you chose created additional costs in the architectural requirements because it was odd terrain. You have to figure out how to get ownership of the land."

Land-use architecture, urban-growth boundaries and site location are critical to provide options for school siting, Johnson said, all of which require a "breath-taking amount of money."

Johnson has been through this process before, after flooding in 2007 destroyed three schools in Vernonia.

"A lesson I learned from rebuilding three schools in Vernonia after a natural disaster: The community has to have skin in the game," Johnson said. "It can't just be, 'Let's go to the state and get them to pay for it.' First, we can't. It cost us \$40 million to rebuild three schools in Vernonia. The costs are so dramatic."

The urgency is growing, and will shape policy in Salem not just in terms of natural disaster funding in our region, but through every future capital project.

"It was actually the presence of Seaside and some other coastal schools in the tsunami zone that caused me to be so adamantly opposed to the Senate president's pet project of rebuilding the Capitol building, to the tune of \$350 million," Johnson said.

"When he was in trying to break our arms to get us to vote for that, I said, 'I cannot, Mr. President, go back to my coastal communities with any modicum of integrity and look parents in the eye and say, "I took care of a box full of politicians before I took care of a box full of kids." That was not what he wanted to hear.'

Same issue, new bond, only three years later? Sell that to voters.

Haste, hustle and Scott Walker

By FRANK BRUNI

New York Times News Service

In the formal announcement of his presidential campaign on Monday, Scott Walker mentioned God right away, introduced himself as a preacher's son and invoked religion repeatedly, as he has throughout a perpetual candidacy that stretches back to his college days, when he told the Marquette University yearbook: "I really think there's a reason why God put all these political thoughts in my head."

But what I see in him is the kind of soullessness too common in American politicians and the kind of careerism that makes American politics such a dreary spectacle.

I see an ambition even more pronounced than any ideology. I see an interest in personal advancement that eclipses any investment in personal growth.

These are hardly unusual traits in our halls of government. But they're distilled in Walker, the governor of Wisconsin.

He's styling himself as a political outsider, but that's a fluke of geography, not professional history. While it's true that he hasn't worked in Washington, he's a political lifer, with a résumé and worldview that are almost nothing but politics.

He's been on one Wisconsin ballot or another almost every two years over the last quarter-century, and he's only 47. Before the governorship, he was a state assemblyman and then a county executive.

We know from the biographies of him so far that he has been absorbed in those "political thoughts" since at least the start of college, before he could have possibly developed any fully considered, deeply informed

set of beliefs or plan for what to do with power.

I suspect that we'll learn, with just a bit more digging, that he was mulling campaign slogans in the womb and ran his first race in the neighborhood wading pool, pledging to ease restrictions on squirt guns and usher in a ban on two-piece bathing suits.

He has drawn barbs for the fact that he left Marquette before graduating and was many credits shy of a degree. But I know plenty of people whose intellectual agility and erudition aren't rooted in the classroom, and his lack of a diploma isn't what's troubling.

The priorities that conspired in it are. He was apparently consumed during his sophomore year by a (failed) bid for student body president. According to a story by David Fahrenthold in *The Washington Post*, he was disengaged from, and cavalier about, the acquisition of knowledge. And he dropped out right around the time he commenced a (failed) candidacy for the Wisconsin state Senate — in his early 20s.

Walker's cart has a way of getting ahead of Walker's horse. Only after several flubbed interviews earlier this year were there reports that he was taking extra time to bone up on world affairs. This was supposed to be a comfort to us, but what would really be reassuring is a candidate who had pursued that mastery already, out of honest curiosity rather than last-minute need.

When allies and opponents talk about his strengths, they seem to focus not on his passion for governing but on his cunning at getting elected. "He's a sneaky-smart campaigner,



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Sen. Betsy Johnson speaking before members of the Seaside Downtown Development Association July 9.

There is some hope in Salem as legislators show a growing awareness of the threat and its immediacy. The Senate considered two bills this year to address seismic dangers.

State Senate Bill 778 gave DOGAMI the power to require mitigation measures for buildings, with the aim of reducing risk to the public. What legislators didn't like and why the bill ultimately failed was the bill would also give the department the power to block development if it decided a building could not be made safe. "Nobody wanted DOGAMI to be in charge of anything," Johnson said, citing a history of bad management and overreach by the agency.

While that measure failed, the Senate did pass Bill 447, with \$125 million that will allow schools in certain situations to apply to the state to move certain facilities or allow schools to apply for seismic retrofits.

The bill establishes a grant program to provide matching fund grants to school districts for capital costs of school districts. Johnson calls it a "pathway" to upgrades in Seaside and Cannon Beach.

According to Johnson, the rules for implementation have not been determined. The bill is awaiting the governor's signature.

Whether or not Superintendent Dougherty can use the proposed state funds remains to be seen, but money was made available, Johnson said.

Clearly any steps in the future will require a coalition of local, state and federal entities. Whether the school district and its voters have the stomach to approach this again after only three years remains to be seen. The cities may also look to include other stakeholders, including educational foundations and environmental organizations, when developing a potential site. Any new building effort will require not only school board, city and state participation, but grassroots support and a capital commitment on the part of our communities.



Frank Bruni

they say, a polished and levelheaded tactician, a master at reading crowds," wrote Kyle Cheney and Daniel Strauss in *Politico*. "He learned the value of ignoring uncomfortable questions, rather than answering them."

What an inspiring lesson, and what a window into political success today.

He tailors his persona to the race at hand. To win his second term as governor of Wisconsin and thus be able to crow, as he's doing now, about the triumph of a conservative politician "in a blue state," he played down his opposition to abortion, signaled resignation to same-sex marriage and explicitly supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

But with his current focus on the Iowa caucuses, he no longer supports a path to citizenship, flaunts his anti-abortion credentials and has called for a constitutional amendment permitting states to outlaw same-sex marriage. He even has a newfound affection for ethanol.

His advisers, meanwhile, trumpet his authenticity. Authenticity? That's in tragically short supply in the presidential race, a quality that candidates assert less through coherent records, steadfast positions or self-effacing commitments than through what they wear (look, Ma, no jacket or necktie!) and even how they motor around. Walker is scheduled to trundle through Iowa later this week in a Winnebago, and of course Hillary Clinton traveled there from New York in that Scooby van.

"I love America," Walker said in Monday's big speech. That was his opening line and an echo of what so many contenders say.

I trust that they all do love this country. But from the way they pander, shift shapes and scheme, I wonder if they love themselves just a little more.