

BOOKS

WHAT ARE THEY READING?



Pigs you know

Calling pigs dirty, author claims, is hogwash

By **TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER**
Special to *The Daily Astorian*

Never have you felt such pain. You were only walking through your kitchen, when you stubbed the Piggy That Had Roast Beef. Yowza, that made you dance. Brought tears to your eyes, too.

Pigs at the end of your feet. Huh. Ridiculous, but there isn't a baby within a mile who won't fall for that game and neither will you, once you read "Lesser Beasts" by Mark Essig.

Many millions of years ago, about 10 million years after dinosaurs died, hooved mammals appeared on Earth. Among them were horses, cattle ... and porcine-like creatures that walked on two digits, possessed a sensitive snout, and resembled humans in gut and heart. That creature ultimately became the pig we know.

While dogs were the first animals to be domesticated, pigs "domesticated themselves" about 11,000 years ago. By that, Essig means that pigs hung around humans long enough to know that food was plentiful, so they moved in with us on their own. Humans quickly realized that pigs were easy to keep; says Essig, "If it was biologically possible to raise pigs, people raised pigs."

Handy and cheap

And that was the case on and off throughout history: Pigs were handy and cheap, which was good for the poor but bad for a pig's reputation. Politically, pigs sometimes "didn't fit" and were ignored as food; other times, they were viewed as a stash of emergency vittles on the hoof. Pigs notoriously eat things that are taboo for us to eat, so they've been called unclean and disgusting. On the other hand, they've saved a lot of people's bacon, in more ways than one.

Furthermore, calling a pig dirty, as Essig points out, is hogwash. Pigs are intelligent and resource-

BOOK REVIEW

"**Lesser Beasts: A Snout-to-Tail History of the Humble Pig**," by Mark Essig
Basic Books, 310 pages, 2015
\$27.50

ful. They'll seize almost any chance to adapt to their surroundings and can help clear land quickly (sometimes to the chagrin of landowners). They are more fecund than both cows and sheep. And, thanks to our willingness to ask where dinner once slept, little piggies that go to market may enjoy better lives before they join us at the table.

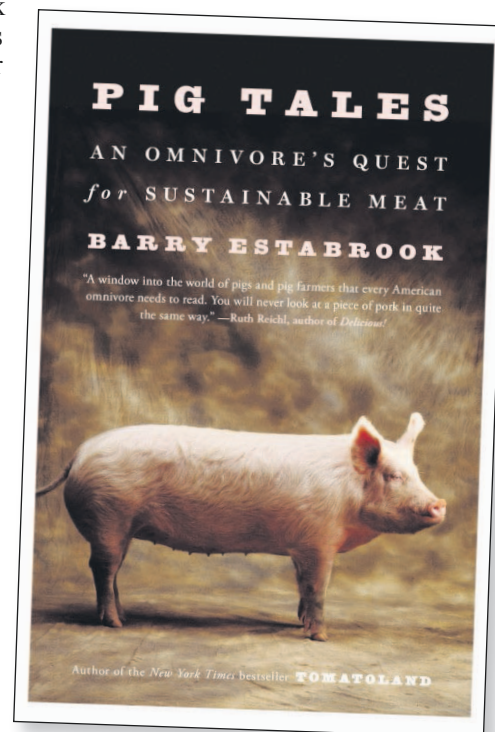
Rival cats online

Forget cats online: what make you say "awwwwww" are videos of those impossibly cute piglets with their long eyelashes. Agree? Then "Lesser Beasts" is going to put you in hog heaven.

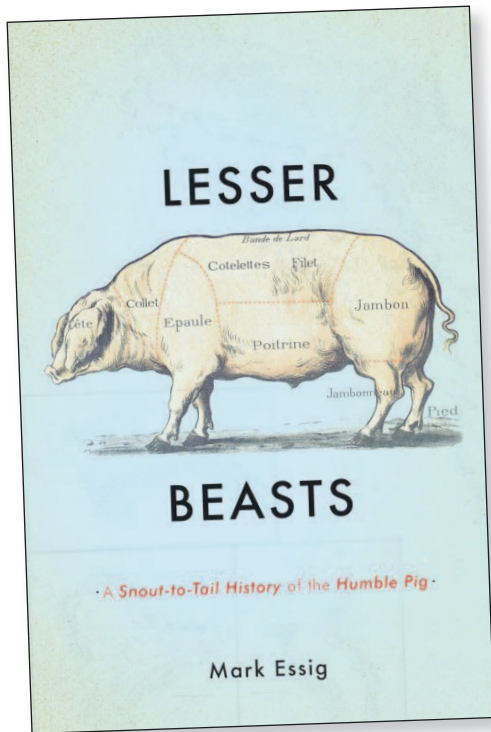
Starting with a herd of porkers and ending with pleas for compassion, the author takes readers on a world tour that starts even before pigs became pigs. That science may be an odd way to start a history book, but it fits — especially since we then head styward to see how hogs have fell into and out of favor with humans. Along the way, Essig fattens up his narrative with little bits of asides; for instance, the first Arnold Ziffel on TV's "Green Acres?"

You don't want to know ... I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

It's got just enough lightheartedness in it to be fun, but it's very informative, too. If you love pigs or you've joined the "cult" of bacon, "Lesser Beasts" is a book you'll want to take all the way home.



"Pig Tales"



"Lesser Beasts"

THE SHIP REPORT

The schooner America comes to Astoria

By **JOANNE RIDEOUT**
Special to *The Daily Astorian*

Sometimes on The Ship Report I sound what I call the "Cool Boat Alert," meaning there's an unusual vessel on the river you might want to take a look at.

I'd like to do that right now — in honor of a very interesting boat coming our way next week. On Wednesday, in Astoria, we'll see a very cool boat indeed, one of the coolest in the world, in fact. You'll even have a chance to go aboard.

This unique and beautiful vessel is the lovely schooner America, an immortal yacht whose name is synonymous with ocean racing. She's responsible for cementing the United States' longtime status as the world leader in sailing competition. Sailors around the world know the America.

She'll be here thanks to the efforts of the Astoria Yacht Club; the club is sponsoring this visit to Astoria, which is part of a world tour leading up to the October 2017 America's Cup Race, to be held in Ber-

muda. The America began her 2015 tour in San Diego. She'll be sailing up the Oregon Coast from Coos Bay to Astoria, and will travel to Portland while she's here on the Columbia. From here she'll journey north to British Columbia and Puget Sound.

Bated breath

When I was a kid growing up in a sailing household in Long Island, N.Y., the America's Cup was a big deal. We waited for the results with bated breath. One time my dad got to go out on a boat and observe the race in the waters off New England. It was a once in a lifetime experience for him. It was sort of assumed, then, that the America's Cup would be won by a U.S. vessel and for many years that was true. It wasn't called the America's Cup for nothing.

The trophy was held by the New York City Yacht Club from 1857 until 1983, when the cup was won by the yacht Australia II for the Royal Perth Yacht Club. I remember that race, and the sense of disbelief felt by people in the U.S. sail-

ing community when those upstart Aussies won "our" trophy. Sheer silliness, to be sure — the race went to the best boat and crew and they were it that year. But it was a loss, a shift, in the (perhaps a bit cocky) tradition of U.S. supremacy in all things maritime. Things were different after that.

The America's Cup race has always boiled down to a competition between two boats: one the current holder of the trophy and the other a challenger who hopes to win it away. Challengers jockey for position and compete until one wins the right to go up against the previous winner. In recent years, the America's Cup has evolved from a competition between two 12-meter yachts, specially designed monohull boats, to the current crop of super-fast multihulls.

Lingo

In case you're not a sailor, here's what that lingo means. Most boats you see have a body or hull that sits in the water. The ships we see on the river are that way. They're called monohulls, meaning they have

one displacement hull. Displacement hulls deal with a lot of friction because they have to literally push the water out of the way. They have maximum hull speeds determined by their length and other factors.

Multihulls, on the other hand, are boats like Hobie Cats, which have two or three light pontoons that hardly touch the water. They can fly along at speeds unheard of for monohulls, because they don't displace water, they skim along on top of it. The huge multihull boats that now compete in the America's Cup fly over the water barely touching the surface, and they attain speeds of more than 50 mph. The shift to these vessels as America's Cup contenders has been a controversial game changer in the racing community. That kind of precision, high-stakes sailing is something most of us will never do. Reputations are won and lost on the strength of split-second decisions made at high speed.

Grand tradition
Racing controversy



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
KMUN General Manager Joanne Rideout is the voice of The Ship Report.

aside, what you'll see next week in Astoria is the boat that started a grand international sailing tradition. A once-in-a-lifetime boat. If you're fond of beautiful vessels, you ought to go down to the dock and see her, take a tour on board or even book a sail if you can. Even though this America is a replica of the original ship, she's still the emblem of the sailing hopes and dreams of people around the world, and it took many, many years of planning, designing and skillful sailing to finally wrest the trophy from her.

You'll be able to see the America at the 17th Street

Dock by the Columbia River Maritime Museum between 1 and 3 p.m. on Wednesday, and you can reserve a sail on board by going to this website: www.zerve.com/nxtlevelsail.

Joanne Rideout is general manager of Coast Community Radio (KMUN-FM) in Astoria. She's also the creator and producer of *The Ship Report*, a radio show and podcast about *All Things Maritime*. You can hear *The Ship Report* on Coast Community Radio at 8:48 a.m. weekdays at 91.9FM, streaming at www.coastradio.org. Podcast available on *The Ship Report* website at www.shipreport.net.

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From left: Peter Wong, Hillary Borrud, Mateusz Perkowski

