

Park: Plans for centennial celebration already in the works

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Chuck Lauderdale, one of the fort builders, said. “We were young enough. We didn’t know it couldn’t be done.”

Lauderdale traveled from Gold Canyon, Ariz., to attend the reunion of Fort Clatsop builders. He was joined by about a dozen other builders, or family of builders.

Fukami did extensive Internet searches and networking to contact the builders. She was able to invite 18 builders and their families out of the roughly 60 people who helped build the site.

Ed Johansen and his sister, Carol Johansen, came to the reunion on behalf of their father, Arthur Johansen, who excavated the land for the fort to be built.

“He cleared where the fort is,” Ed Johansen said. “I remember going over there and watching him.”

The builders’ work was destroyed in 2005, when Fort Clatsop caught fire.

Lauderdale recalls feeling upset when he heard the news, but relieved that the fort was already designated as a national monument so a rebuild would happen fast.

National Park Service carpenters and historians



A model of Fort Clatsop built by the Lil' Sprouts Academy Daffodil class sits on display at the National Park Service's 99th birthday party Saturday at Netul Landing.

came to accurately rebuild the fort, which is currently standing today at the park.

“That took the pressure off the rebuild,” Lauderdale said.

Centennial celebration

Looking ahead toward the National Park Service’s centennial celebration next year, Lewis and Clark Superintendent Scott Tucker said the park is preparing

to launch a yearlong fitness challenge.

“I Would Walk 2016 Miles, Clatsop County Team Fitness Challenge” will launch in cooperation with numerous community partners Oct. 1.

“We are going to challenge residents of Clatsop County and beyond to form teams of five to 10 to walk, run, bike, skate or swim 2016 miles in 336 days,” Tucker said. “The

breakdown would be 3 to 5 miles per team member per week.”

The park will use a mileage conversion table for all types of activities including yoga, weight training, skiing and cardio workouts. In addition, the park is working on a tracking mechanism to allow participants to log their miles and set up group activities.

If the yearlong challenge sounds intimidating, Tucker



Amelia Hillard, 3, of Astoria, watches a spider she caught in the bug catching area at the National Park Service's 99th birthday party Saturday at Netul Landing.



From left, Colin, Debbie, and Jenessa Smith, of Corvallis, build paper badges during the National Park Service's 99th birthday party.

said, the challenge can be broken up into three 120-day challenge events.

The park is hoping for 50 to 75 teams from the area to participate.

Port: Knight estimated Smithart owes the Port and city about \$400,000

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Hollander’s company manages Marriott hotels in Puyallup and Tacoma, Wash. The company operates Crowne Plazas in downtown Portland and near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, along with a Best Western hotel and conference center and a Holiday Inn Express in Puyallup.

Knight said he was organizing another closed executive session for Tuesday, in which Hollander would be invited to pitch the Port Commission on his vision. The Port has set a public special meeting for 10:30 a.m. Tues-

day regarding a short-term lease for the Riverwalk Inn, with a possible executive session to follow.

Who’s stopping who?

Brad Smithart, the heavily indebted operator of the Riverwalk Inn waiting to be evicted, came to The Daily Astorian Wednesday to air his grievances. Smithart said he is not trying to stop the Port from replacing him as operator.

Knight estimated Smithart owes the Port and city about \$400,000. The Port terminated Smithart’s lease last month and went to court to try and evict him. But the parties

reached an amicable eviction agreement and canceled the case. Smithart is still operating the hotel as the Port tries to find a new taker without shutting the lodging down in peak season.

Ganesh Sonpatki, a Portland operator of budget hotels who has long courted Smithart, and Astoria native William Orr, a lawyer and seafood salesman in Seattle who has partnered with former Hotel Elliott and Nos. 1 and 10 Sixth St. developer Chester Trabucco, also made presentations to the Port last month. Both suitors said they had made at least \$350,000 available to pay off all Smi-

thart’s debts and take over operation of the Riverwalk Inn immediately, adding they have received limited communication from the Port.

“Cash the check, or wipe the debt and stop slandering my name in public,” Smithart said Wednesday.

But Knight said the Port, which terminated Smithart’s lease last month, has no lease it can assign to another operator.

“I’m past being able to believe anything from Brad,” Knight said.

The Kancharla family, which runs adult foster homes and a restaurant in Astoria, had also been interested in the Riv-

erwalk Inn, but pulled out after reviewing the hotel’s finances.

“The Kancharas told me over 5,000 rooms had been prebooked,” Knight said, adding an unknown number of the rooms have been prepaid.

The Port Commission in March 2012 sided with Smithart and partner Seth Davis’ proposal to reopen the hotel over a competing proposal by the significantly more well-established Williams/Dame & Associates, which wanted the Port to tear the former Red Lion down before it would build a new hotel and redevelop the surrounding boardwalk.

The commission gave

Smithart and Davis a five-year lease running through most of 2017, later providing a break on rent in the winter months.

A common sentiment is that Smithart might be taking money from the hotel and putting it into the Arc Arcade, a business in downtown Astoria he opened last summer, during another time when he was falling behind at the hotel.

But Smithart said the arcade machines came from friends, family and his own collection, with little overhead to start the business besides putting in utilities and painting. “My sister and kids are down there,” he said. “I fix the games.”

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