

# 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*

## Welcome back

Fall allows us to reclaim our communities

With autumn in the air, the high school sports season begins. As August's mega events become a memory, pressure on our city streets and highways diminishes.

Tourism does not go away in the fall. Seven cruise ships will be calling in Astoria. But those passengers bring no vehicles.

In a nutshell, what we rediscover in this season is the value of our communities and their importance in our lives. Their cultural and political coherence is one of our most valuable assets.

That is one way of understanding the high emotion in Gearhart over the matter of short-term rentals. Year-round residents easily may feel overrun and unsettled by homes that seemingly belong to no one.

Schools are, in many ways, the heartbeat of a community. It is a pleasure to see the rhythm of the school year begin once more.

Without vibrant schools — starting with preschool and kindergarten — our towns lose their future.

There is a link between tourism and community, but it is about much more than dollars in cash registers. If we make our towns more comfortable for permanent residents, they will be more attractive to visitors. That's what Maurie Clark understood about Cannon Beach in the 1970s. Astoria has always had tourists. But some 25 years ago, the town lacked the comforts and infrastructure that tourists hope to find — good restaurants and hotels. Astoria raised its game with the Riverwalk, a restored historic theater and an aquatic center.

There is a sense of coming home about this season. Welcome back.

## Room to grow, but lots to praise

A September report on the state's rural areas by the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis offers much validation for the view that the North Coast is well positioned to keep building on the positive momentum observed this summer.

This report, "Rural Oregon," <http://bit.ly/1KZlmg5>, isn't all good for the North Coast. Through this June, we still had about 4 percent fewer jobs than before the national housing bust. Recession-driven cuts in government and construction jobs, plus long-term downward trends in natural-resources employment, account for our slow jobs recovery.

Even so, we are far better off than the south coast and inland southeast Oregon, where jobs are still nearly as scarce as they were at the depths of the recession. The report notes that a particularly aged population is an economic challenge in southern Oregon, since older residents tend to have a lower rate of participation in the labor force. On average, an older population tends to spend less, produce less and start fewer new businesses.

However, the OEA's report picks up on a different economic trend involving older people that is distinctly advantageous: Rural Oregon is in the midst of a strong influx of well-off migrants from other states, who bring skills, energy and wealth. "Much of the time they are older and relocate to rural Oregon as they retire or reduce their work hours. Such migration trends are particularly strong in coastal, central and southern Oregon. Furthermore, many bring with them not only a lifetime of experience but also wealth, often in the form of California home equity," the report says.

The North Coast — especially

Clatsop County — feels qualitatively reinvigorated by a rising tide of people interested in building new lives here. Many, but not all, are the sort of 50-plus semi-retirees described in the economic report.

Also highlighted by OEA's analysis is the North Coast's relatively high level of education. Nearly 22 percent of working-age adults in this region have at least a college bachelor's degree. Though this is less than the 33 percent in urban Oregon, the North Coast is far more educated than rural Oregon as a whole, which has college-degree attainment of 18.7 percent. Among rural Oregon regions, only Columbia Gorge has more residents who have successfully completed a four-year degree.

The OEA's report didn't look at community college education, but the strength of Clatsop Community College is a great advantage for our county and region, helping educate a work force that fills jobs in our thriving healthcare sector and other industries requiring more than a high school diploma.

Much is written about the urban-rural economic divide in Oregon. That a small report like OEA's has generated so much attention is both an indication of widespread interest in the subject, and a commentary on how rarely the state actually produces anything germane to the discussion.

Ultimately, local advancement on the North Coast has much to do with sustained initiative, creativity, scenic splendor and our relative proximity to Portland.

There's clearly still room for improvement in the North Coast's economy, but OEA's report is a welcome validation that there are a number of things we can be happy and proud about.

## Open forum

### Register today

The Independent Party of Oregon is now the third "major party" in Oregon. We want to offer voters more choices on their ballots.

Anyone possibly interested in running for office as the candidate of the Independent Party needs to change his or her voter registration to "Independent Party" by today. It takes about two minutes, here: <http://indparty.com/register>. Or just search "Oregon voter register" online.

Potential candidates need not decide whether to run until the primary election filing deadline, March 8. But, thanks to the Democrats and Republicans, current law requires signing up for the Independent Party by today, more than eight months before the May primary election.

DAN MEEK  
 Portland

**Editor's note:** Dan Meek is co-chairman of the Independent Party of Oregon.

# Reagan, the GOP heretic

By TIMOTHY EGAN  
*New York Times News Service*

In just under two weeks, the Republicans who want to be president will gather in Simi Valley, Calif., at the presidential library of Ronald Reagan for their second debate. You can expect much brown-nosing, bloviating and outright fabricating in homage to the patron saint of all true conservatives, the charming 40th president.

If only the candidates were truthful to the man and his record. For the real Ronald Reagan — serial tax-raiser, illegal immigrant amnesty granter, deficit creator, abortion enabler, gun control supporter and peacenik — would never be allowed on the stage. The party has moved so far to the right from Reagan's many centrist positions that the guy would be told to go find a home among the Democrats.

More than three decades after Reagan was first elected, his name is invoked, like political Tourette's syndrome, by everyone from Scott Walker to Donald

Trump. But there's a gaping disconnect among Republicans between the Reagan worship of 2015 and the reality of his long, public career.

Start with immigration, and the police-state proposals that have driven Trump to the top of Republican polls. As president, Reagan signed a bill that granted amnesty to nearly three million people who were in this country illegally. And then he went a step further, acting on his own after signing the first bill, to extend amnesty to another 100,000 people.

Reagan would never back the authoritarian roundup and deportation that Trump advocates, or the Big Brother tracking of immigrants "like FedEx packages," as Gov. Chris Christie has proposed.

While Trump vows to build a giant wall, Reagan is best known for four words: "tear down this wall." He was referring to the Berlin barrier, but he could have been talking about obstructions for immigrants from south of the border. "I believe in the idea of amnesty for those who have put down roots

## The myth of quality family time

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

Every summer for many years now, my family has kept to our ritual.

All 20 of us — my siblings, my dad, our better halves, my nieces and nephews — find a beach house big enough to fit the whole unruly clan.

We journey to it from our different states and time zones. We tensely divvy up the bedrooms, trying to remember who fared poorly or well on the previous trip. And we fling ourselves at one another for seven days and seven nights.

That's right: a solid week. It's that part of the ritual that mystifies many of my friends, who endorse family closeness but think that there can be entirely too much of it. Wouldn't a long weekend suffice? And wouldn't it ward off a few spats and simplify the planning?

The answer to the second question is yes, but to the first, an emphatic no.

I used to think that shorter would be better, and in the past, I arrived for these beach vacations a day late or fled two days early, telling myself that I had to when in truth I also wanted to — because I crave my space and my quiet, and because I weary of marinating in sunscreen and discovering sand in strange places. But in recent years, I've showed up at the start and stayed for the duration, and I've noticed a difference.

With a more expansive stretch, there's a better chance that I'll be around at the precise, random moment when one of my nephews drops his guard and solicits my advice about something private. Or when one of my nieces will need someone other than her parents to tell her that she's smart and beautiful. Or when one of my siblings will flash back on an incident from our childhood that makes us laugh uncontrollably, and suddenly the cozy, happy chain of our love is cinched that much tighter.

There's simply no real substitute for physical presence.

We delude ourselves when we say otherwise, when we invoke and venerate "quality time," a shopworn phrase with a debatable promise: that we can



David Goldman/AP Photo

Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush waves to the crowd while walking past a portrait of former President Ronald Reagan after speaking at the RedState Gathering Saturday in Atlanta.

and lived here for some time and may have entered illegally," said President Reagan. You can hear the boos in the Reagan Library should any Republican say such a thing today.

Taxes. Yes, Reagan reduced the top rate, which was onerously high. But he was no absolutist, as required under the senseless no-new-taxes-ever pledge that all Republicans are supposed to take. Reagan raised taxes at least four times during his two terms in office, and 11 times by some readings of the record.

He had to do this because the federal deficit and the size of government ballooned all out of proportion while he was president. Yep, with Reagan the government-hater in charge, the size of the federal government grew to 5.3 million employees, and the federal debt nearly tripled, to \$2.9 trillion. What's more, he raised the debt ceiling — something modern Republicans are willing to shut down the whole shebang over — 18 times. Heretic!

What about social issues — the bedrock of values? It's a given that Republican candidates oppose abortion in nearly all cases. Some of them want the government to reach into the bodies of American women and declare zygotes to be people, protected by an intrusive federal intervener.

And the sainted Reagan? Yes, he mouthed the pro-life line, while doing next to nothing for the cause as presi-

dent. But if you want to see an act of real consequence, turn to the abortion liberalization bill that Reagan signed as governor of California in 1967. Legal abortions in his state went from 518 a year to nearly a million over the next decade.

Want to hear another round of cat-calls? Let's talk guns. Shot by a crazy man, Reagan became an advocate of sensible firearms legislation. He backed the Brady Bill — named for his wounded press secretary — that was signed by President Clinton. It required background checks for criminals, and a waiting period. He also supported an assault weapons ban, as most Americans still do. His words against assault weapons are credited with helping the ban pass a reluctant Congress in the Clinton era.

The Brady Bill has stopped more than 1.2 million people, those with felonies or a history of mental illness, from buying guns. And on that stage in Reagan's library on Sept. 16, the Brady Bill will be hard-pressed to find a single supporter.

Well, at least Reagan was tough on the Commies — a foreign policy with muscle. Yes, he was. But Reagan had a soft spot. While negotiating a nuclear arms treaty with the Soviets, this sunny optimist envisioned an even grander step. "My dream," he wrote in his memoirs, "became a world free of nuclear weapons." Cue the John Lennon song "Imagine."

Did I mention that he sold arms to terrorists? That he supplied money and sophisticated weapons to what would grow into the Taliban and create the monster of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan? Or that perhaps the worst foreign policy debacle on his watch — the death of 248 Marines at the hands of terrorists in Lebanon, resulting in a shameful retreat — makes Benghazi look like a game of pinochle?

I mention these things now because no one will in the upcoming debate.

Reagan was a conservative for his time. But his record was complicated. What's happened to Republicans since then is similar to what Reagan once said about his earlier political affiliation — he didn't leave the party, the party left him.

**Reagan was a conservative for his time. But his record was complicated.**

plan instances of extraordinary candor, plot episodes of exquisite tenderness, engineer intimacy in an appointed hour.

We can try. We can corndon off one meal each day or two afternoons each week and weed them of distractions. We can choose a setting that encourages relaxation and uplift. We can fill it with totems and frippery — a balloon for a child, sparkling wine for a spouse — that signal celebration and create a sense of the sacred.

And there's no doubt that the degree of attentiveness that we bring to an occasion ennobles or demeans it. Better to spend 15 focused, responsive minutes than 30 utterly distracted ones.

But people tend not to operate on cue. At least our moods and emotions don't. We reach out for help at odd points; we bloom at unpredictable ones. The surest way to see the brightest colors, or the darkest ones, is to be watching and waiting and ready for them.

That's reflected in a development that Claire Cain Miller and David Streitfeld wrote about in *The Times* last week. They noted that "a workplace culture that urges new mothers and fathers to hurry back to their cubicles is beginning to shift," and they cited "more family-friendly policies" at Microsoft and Netflix, which have extended the leave that parents can take.

How many parents will step off the fast track and avail themselves of this remains to be seen. But those who do will be deciding that the quantity of time with their brood matters as much as the intensity of it.

They'll be lucky. Many people aren't privileged enough to exercise such discretion. My family is lucky, too. We have the means to get away.

But we're also dedicated to it, and we've determined that Thanksgiving Day isn't ample, that Christmas Eve passes too quickly, and that if each of us really means to be central in the others' lives, we must make an investment, the biggest components of which are minutes, hours, days. As soon as our beach week this summer was done, we huddled over our calendars and traded



Frank Bruni

scores of emails to figure out which week next summer we could all set aside. It wasn't easy. But it was essential.

Couples move in together not just because it's economically prudent. They understand, consciously or instinctively, that sustained proximity is the best route to the soul of someone; that unscripted gestures at unexpected junctures yield sweeter rewards than scripted ones on date night; that the "I love you" that counts most isn't whispered with great ceremony on a hilltop in Tuscany. No, it slips out casually, spontaneously, in the produce section or over the dishes, amid the drudgery and detritus of their routines. That's also when the truest confessions are made, when hurt is at its rawest and tenderness at its purest.

I know how my 80-year-old father feels about dying, religion and God not because I scheduled a discrete encounter to discuss all of that with him. I know because I happened to be in the passenger seat of his car when such thoughts were on his mind and when, for whatever unforeseeable reason, he felt comfortable articulating them.

And I know what he appreciates and regrets most about his past because I was not only punctual for this summer's vacation, but also traveled there with him, to fatten our visit, and he was uncharacteristically ruminative on that flight.

It was over lunch at the beach house one day that my oldest nephew spoke with unusual candor, and at unusual length, about his expectations for college, his experiences in high school — stuff that I'd grilled him about previously, never harvesting the generous answers that he volunteered during that particular meal.

It was on a run the next morning that my oldest niece described, as she'd never done for me before, the joys, frustrations and contours of her relationships with her parents, her two sisters and her brother. Why this information tumbled out of her then, with pelicans overheard and sweat slicking our foreheads, I can't tell you. But I can tell you that I'm even more tightly bonded with her now, and that's not because of some orchestrated, contrived effort to plumb her emotions. It's because I was present. It's because I was there.

**There's simply no real substitute for physical presence.**