

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## Small farm success destroys a myth

*Clatsop County 1980 plan discourages farming*

Americans take farming for granted, believing it is static, unchanging.

We buy food in supermarkets, often with little knowledge of where the food came from.

Consumer attitudes and farming are changing. Small farms are popping up with some regularity in the Columbia-Pacific region. Behind these ventures is a new generation of entrepreneurs. They are playing to a new consumer base that cares deeply about where their food source is.

Sometimes these people come to farming with a degree in agriculture. More often, farming is a second or third life choice.

Teresa Retzlaff is one of the most energetic and articulate examples of the new breed of farmer. Retzlaff's odyssey that brought her to 46 North Farm in Olney is like that of many other self-taught business people. She told her story last week at Columbia Forum.

Every line of work has its barriers to entry, many of which are based on myth. One myth that Retzlaff exposed and demolished is the belief that you can't farm on the North Coast. In her early quest, she heard that shibboleth. She found it embodied in Clatsop County's 1980 Comprehensive Plan, which says that the future of farming in this county is not bright.

Contrary to popular belief, running a farm is a complex enterprise.

Retzlaff said that stamina is important, but so is an array of knowledge from soil science to insects to accounting and marketing.

One measure of the vitality of the small agriculture movement is Oregon State University's response. After decades of devotion to big production agriculture, OSU in 2013 established the Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems, with two faculty members.

Retzlaff credits the OSU center with having programs that are relevant to the emerging farmer. These programs are delivered through OSU's statewide extension network, which has been active in small farming since the 1990s. One of the Center for Small Farms' new programs is titled Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Management.

Educational resources are essential to any line of business. But the rarest part of entrepreneurship is the entrepreneur. That describes the value of Retzlaff and her husband, Packy Coleman. Their persistence is an example for others who might nurture the ambition to farm.

The emergence of small farms, as well as farmers markets, on the North Coast is one of the healthiest trends in our larger region — extending to Washington's Pacific County and Puget Island.

## Fee was always ready to rescue

*Staunch wildlife advocate left lasting legacy*

Sharnelle Fee, who died last week at age 68, exhibited a level of passion for her cause that was deeply admirable — the kind of thorough engagement that considerably makes up for the indifference of others.

Her cause was useful and humane here at the dangerous interface between North America and the Pacific Ocean. She founded and played an oversized role in the operation of the Wildlife Center of the North Coast, a kind of triage center and hospital for sick and injured creatures around the mouth of the Columbia River.

Since Fee launched the center in the spring of 1999, it has rehabilitated thousands of seabirds, raptors and other animals.

The center has often been in the news, for example when ocean conditions have resulted in dozens of seriously ailing birds washing ashore in a short time. Fee and a devoted cadre of volunteers met such demands with dedication worthy of a Korean War-era MASH unit, working countless hours in the hope of saving and returning to the wild as many avian victims as possible.

No job was too big or too small — bald eagles to ducklings were rescued at the wildlife center, always with the goal of returning them to their habitats.

"No matter how many we fight to save and finally get to release back into nature, this is what it's really all about: releasing healthy wildlife back to their natural homes while kids and parents and volunteers see where all the long

hours and heartfelt effort goes. That's just about as good as life can get," she told a reporter in November 1999.

Fee sank her life savings into the Olney property that is still home to the wildlife center, after having already dedicated a decade to animal rehab. Now operating as an IRS-recognized nonprofit corporation, the center's board is committed to keeping it going. It is to be hoped they succeed. Without the center, euthanasia would often be the default response for most ailing wildlife found on our beaches and elsewhere.

Like all who passionately believe in their missions, Fee was not universally popular. Nor did all her positions find majority support in local communities. She was very much opposed, for instance, to government efforts to lower the population of salmon-eating birds in the Columbia estuary. Some decried her as a do-gooder.

But in Fee's case, it was always about the wildlife. Asked about her relationship with the public, she said, "I believe the people of the Pacific Northwest care deeply about the environment and its wildlife. I have met individuals who have made extraordinary effort to rescue distressed wildlife that they find. Our center is here to help them complete that effort by providing a place for wildlife to receive medical treatment and rehabilitative care."

In an age when most of us experience nature via television, Fee was a hands-on advocate. Her absence will be noticed.

## GUEST COLUMN

# Children have right to protection

By MARGARET FRIMOTH  
*For The Daily Astorian*

The topic of child sexual abuse is always disturbing, and often, more complex than can be imagined.

Child sexual abuse is a community issue that dramatically impacts our schools, work environments, places of worship and, too frequently, our personal relationships.

In response, let's take a collective deep breath and learn to deal effectively with the statistical ramifications surrounding childhood trauma.

Despite more than three decades of work in this area, the statistics still unnerve me. For instance, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services (2014), 10 percent of children in Clatsop County have experienced childhood victimization. The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAIN) states that a sexual assault occurs in the U.S. every two minutes, and that 44 percent of the victims are children under age 18. The Center for Disease Control, reports that 200 million workdays are lost annually due to unresolved childhood trauma.

If we truly care about children, we cannot allow ignorance, despair, or manipulation to define a community standard about sexual abuse. Recently, defense attorney Jay Frank wrote an editorial that attempted to sway public opinions away from protecting children by diminishing the actions of his client, now a convicted sex offender. His words compounded the opinions written in an earlier editorial by Jack Harris.

Specifically, Frank used legal rhetoric to obscure the uncomfortable evidence — a child was sexually abused, bribed, and threatened by a trusted caregiver. Frank shifts the focus away from the abuse by spotlighting convicted offender, Michel Thomas Mitchell, as not guilty because he plead "by Alford."

Let's face it, most sex offenders deny guilt. That is to be expected. Let's not make offender denial newsworthy. Instead, as community members, we need to understand the role of defense attorneys without sacrificing our responsibility to protect children.

In actuality, the sexual abuse of children is a heinous crime. Its destructiveness extends well beyond a single court case. The statistical reality of the crime may numb our responses and muddle our ability to act decisively on behalf of children.

When this occurs, we may feel



sorry for the accused, or we may be unable to fathom the descriptions of abuse. We may question children's disclosures because they are too disturbing to believe. News headlines rarely capture the pain, the betrayal, or the

**Stand up for children. Listen. Believe. Protect.**

long-term consequences of abuse. The normalization of sexual violence in popular culture means that only the most horrendous accounts of abuse make headlines.

But statistically, we are surrounded by abuse, and in response, community members may find themselves divided between support of the victim or the perpetrator. When divisions take center stage, the devastation left by the abuse is shouldered primarily by the child and nonoffending friends and family members. Yet, honestly, we all suffer from the burden of abuse.

Defense attorneys capitalize on our confusion, our denial and our fatigue. It is their job to chisel away at a community's resolve to safeguard children. Still, we must hold offenders accountable while ensuring a community standard that does not tolerate abuse. This begins by acknowledging the reality of abuse.

A good illustration was the Astoria Co-op Grocery's immediate actions when employee Mitchell was arrested and charged with child sexual abuse. Had the co-op waited for a legal reso-

lution before taking action, they would have sent a clear message to all shoppers that safety was not their primary goal. But the Astoria Co-op did not respond this way.

Instead, the entire Board of Directors took swift action to remove Mitchell, to protect children and families, to speak out against acts of victimization, and to ensure a safe environment. Their actions are commendable and I encourage others to join me in supporting the Astoria Co-op with our thanks and our purchases. Perhaps more businesses and organizations will follow suit.

Child sexual abuse thrives on three major contributing factors — victim-blaming, victim-playing and silencing. Watch for these strategies as they are interwoven into sexual abuse cases. Recognize them as ploys to mislead and deceive. Don't fall prey to the tactics. Instead, stand up for children. Listen. Believe. Protect.

If you get confused, remember that we expect fire departments to respond immediately without waiting to confirm whether a fire exists. In an emergency, we understand that due process follows action. The sexual abuse of children is no less an emergency. Children have a right to safety and protection as a primary obligation of a healthy community. Let's embrace this standard of care for our children.

*Astorian Margaret Frimoth is a founder of Victory Over Child Abuse (VOCA) Camps*

## Putin's gambit, Obama's puzzlement

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

WASHINGTON — Once again, President Obama and his foreign policy team are stumped.

Why is Vladimir Putin pouring troops and weaponry into Syria?

After all, as Secretary of State John Kerry has thrice told his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, it is only making things worse.

But worse for whom? For the additional thousands of civilians who will die or flee as a result of the inevitably intensified fighting. True, and I'm sure Lavrov is as moved by their plight as by the 8,000 killed in Russia's splendid little Ukrainian adventure.

Kerry and Obama are serially surprised because they cannot fathom the hard men in the Kremlin. Yet Putin's objectives in Syria are blindingly obvious:

1. To assert Russia's influence in the Middle East and make it the dominant outside power. Putin's highest ambition is to avenge and reverse Russia's humiliating loss of superpower status a quarter-century ago. Understanding this does not come easily to an American president who for seven years has been assiduously curating America's decline abroad.

2. To sustain Russia's major and long-standing Arab ally. Ever since Anwar Sadat kicked the Soviets out of Egypt in 1972, Syria's Assad has been Russia's principal asset in the Middle East.

3. To expand the reach of Russia's own military. It has a naval base at Tartus, its only such outside of Russia. It has an airfield near Latakia, now being expanded with an

infusion of battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, howitzers and housing for 1,500 — strongly suggesting ground forces to follow.

4. To push out the Americans. For Putin, geopolitics is a zero-sum game: Russia up, America down. He is demonstrating whom you can rely on in this very tough neighborhood. Obama has given short shrift to the Kurds, shafted America's allies with the Iran deal and abandoned the Anbar Sunnis who helped us win the surge. Meanwhile, Putin risks putting Russian boots on the ground to rescue his Syrian allies.

Obama says Bashar al-Assad has to go, draws a red line on chemical weapons — and does nothing. Russia acts on behalf of a desperate ally. Whom do you want in your corner?

5. To relegitimize post-Crimea Russia by making it indispensable in Syria. It's a neat two-cushion shot. At the U.N. next week, Putin will offer Russia as a core member of a new anti-Islamic State coalition. Obama's Potemkin war — with its phantom local troops (our \$500 million training program has yielded five fighters so far) and flaccid air campaign — is

flailing badly. What Putin is proposing is that Russia, Iran and Hezbollah spearhead the anti-jihadist fight. Putin's offer is clear: Stop fighting Assad, accept Russia as a major player, and acquiesce to a Russia-Iran-Hezbollah regional hegemony — and we will lead the drive against the Islamic State from in front.

And there is a bonus. The cleverest part of the Putin gambit is its unstated cure for Europe's refugee crisis. Wracked by guilt and fear, the



Charles Krauthammer

Europeans have no idea what to do. Putin offers a way out: No war, no refugees. Stop the Syrian civil war and not only do they stop flooding into Europe, those already there go back home to Syria.

Putin says, settle the war with my client in place — the Assad regime joined by a few "healthy" opposition forces — and I

solve your refugee nightmare. You almost have to admire the cynicism. After all, what's driving the refugees is the war and what's driving the war is Iran and Russia. They provide the material, the funds and now, increasingly, the troops that fuel the fighting. The arsonist plays fireman.

After all, most of the refugees are not fleeing the Islamic State. Its depravity is more ostentatious, but it is mostly visited upon minorities, Christian and Yazidi — and they have already been largely ethnically cleansed from Islamic State territory. The European detention camps are overflowing with Syrians fleeing Assad's barbarism, especially his attacks on civilians, using artillery, chlorine gas and nail-filled barrel bombs.

Putin to the rescue. As with the chemical weapons debacle, he steps in to save the day. If we acquiesce, Russia becomes an indispensable partner. It begins military and diplomatic coordination with us. (We've just agreed to negotiations over Russia's Syrian build-up.) Its post-Ukraine isolation is lifted and, with Iran, it becomes the regional arbiter.

In the end, the Putin strategy may not work, but it's deadly serious and not at all obscure. The White House can stop scratching its collective head whenever another Condor transport unloads its tanks and marines at Latakia.