

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*

New future awaits legendary ship-rescue vessel

Salvage Chief slated for educational mission in Columbia estuary

Anyone who lived near the mouth of the Columbia River in the second half of the 20th century is certain to know of “the powerful tug *Salvage Chief*, famed savior of many a ship in distress,” to quote *Pacific Graveyard*, by James A. Gibbs.

It’s exciting to learn that *Salvage Chief* LLC, a group headed by Pier 39 owner Floyd Holcom, and a related foundation have acquired this legendary workhorse and returned it to the estuary “as both a memorial to past crewmen and as an education tool for future seaman.”

Salvage Chief worked not just in local waters, but was called upon to refloat hundreds of vessels stranded along the U.S. West Coast between 1947 and 2008. As our Monday story noted, during its active career *Salvage Chief* employed many area residents, some of whom will play an active role in crafting a new set of missions for it. These former crew members and support staff will be its most passionate supporters, but there is no overstating just how prominent *Salvage Chief* was in local news and community consciousness.

By setting anchors, attaching winches and carefully maneuvering — often in dangerous conditions — *Salvage Chief* was able to redeem situations that would otherwise have been hopeless. The amount of property and environmental damage thus avoided must easily total hundreds of millions of dollars over the course of its storied career. This made *Salvage Chief* and its highly trained crew into celebrities in the maritime communities of the Pacific coast, whose accomplishments were front-page news and the topic of countless coffee shop conversations.

Vast improvements in navigation, nautical systems, communications, timely U.S. Coast Guard response and other factors mean fewer occasions for heroic maritime rescues now than when *Salvage Chief* was in its prime. But the ship nevertheless offers the opportunity to impart firsthand lessons to new generations of young people interested in careers on the ocean. Holcom hopes to form collaborations with Tongue Point Job Corps, Clatsop Community College’s Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station and the U.S. Army.

Salvage Chief has an honorable record of service. It’s good to see the possibility that it will remain intact and serve useful new roles here at the mouth of the Columbia.

Compared to Congress, Pope Francis glows

The phenomenon of Pope Francis is summed up by an American journalist who covers him at the Vatican.

On Sunday, Rachel Donadio of *The New York Times* wrote: “In the two short years since his election, Pope Francis has managed an unusual feat: He has become as beloved by the international news media and the secular intelligentsia as by his own flock of 1.2 billion.”

This week, the pope is in Cuba and he comes to Washington, D.C. On Thursday, he will speak to a joint session of Congress.

Francis’ arrival during a surreal presidential campaign season is most welcome.

The sequence of Cuba, followed by the Washington appearance, makes a certain point. The motivation for secret talks between Cuba and the U.S. came from this first South American pope. That led to a resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries after five decades of a Cold War dynamic.

The pope made a broad declaration on climate change and the damage it brings to the poorest, in his encyclical *Laudato Si*. That made some American presidential candidates squirm.

Jeb Bush, a Catholic, virtually disclaimed the pope’s credential for offering scientific advice to the world.

The truth is that politicians are the last people we should be looking to for scientific or moral guidance. Or apparently for guidance on pressing matters such as climate change and immigration. What most of the Republicans running for president know best is the politics of fear. There is little hope in their messages.

Rachel Donadio makes a useful observation about the selection of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires as pope. Noting that the Italians who dominate the Vatican press corps did not see his elevation coming, she says: “It was outside their field of vision. It was outside almost everyone’s field of vision.”

We long for a national leader who will move our politics away from the congressional cycle of anger, resentment, retribution and procrastination. That is not likely to happen. And that’s why we anticipate Pope Francis’ American visit with enthusiasm.

Remembering John Duncan

Arriving in the South County in May from the East was like landing in a different world.

One of the first people to capture our attention was John Duncan.

Who was this Santa Claus figure wearing short pants and orange Crocs? He sat at the Gearhart City Council meeting next to Mayor Dianne Widdop and had the calm and placid demeanor of the Buddha.

The topic was a fence ordinance. Everybody else wanted a fence ordinance. Duncan didn’t see the need and said so. “We still have the international building code. “We would have something in place.”

He was not only one or two chess moves ahead, he was three or four. He said that an ordinance without a permit requirement made no sense. “Without a permit requirement in the city we have no way of tracking what is going on,” he said. “The original updated ordinance had a permit in it, and the council decided they didn’t like it and took it out.”

In a subsequent meeting, he masterfully navigated a street vacation — a homeowner’s request to remedy a century-old surveyor’s error. They wanted relief from the city to help them set their maps straight.

Duncan knew councilors needed to make things right, but he made sure the city didn’t give away the store. He pressed for an easement that would preserve city utility access and limit potential building size on the site — important concessions that will benefit all residents.

He was among the leaders calling for a new and safer firehouse and emergency center in Gearhart, and volunteered to serve on a committee to make that happen.

Duncan seemed to embody everything we like about the state: big man, big heart, independent and love of the outdoors.

Duncan — or “Dunc” as his old friends called him — hung out at the Pacific Way every day it was open, and he was glad to enlighten his audience, in a good way. When he said I wrote a good story in *The Daily Astorian* or the *Seaside Signal*, it meant he had read every word and every punctuation mark. It meant a lot.

In his spare time, Duncan led a small, homegrown crew to reclaim the city’s beloved Ridge Path, the former Indian trail crossing through backyards and side yards.

No matter how old you are, you feel like a kid on the Ridge Path. From its earliest days, the path was a shaded cross-through from town to Little Beach. The path was overgrown in places, impassable, even. Despite ill health, Duncan and his

Betty Smith/The Daily Astorian
Hundreds of friends and mourners came to Gearhart last week to remember John Duncan.

Submitted Photo
John Duncan

volunteer army traipsed through mud, brambles and elk poop with loppers and saws.

He worked so long and with such pride that other volunteers would have to plead fatigue to convince him it was time to quit for the day. He was out working on the path two days before his death, and at the Gearhart Homeowners Association luncheon the day before. No irony ever lost on Duncan, the homeowners association themselves had conceived and nurtured the path.

Gearhart needed John Duncan. He was elected in 2014 in the midst of a growing political clash leading to a failed recall election of Mayor Dianne Widdop.

When no one else had the answers, he did. Widdop, councilors, the city’s manager Chad Sweet looked to him for guidance and so did the city attorney.

The flags were at half-staff in Gearhart this week, and that was appropriate, for his loss doesn’t only bring sorrow to his family. It makes us all too aware of what we as a com-

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

By R.J. MARX



A ‘PATH’ TO HIS MEMORY

The city of Gearhart has set up a memorial fund in honor of City Councilman, John Duncan.

The proceeds of this fund will be used to complete the extension of the ridge path through the wetland areas. Councilman Duncan used his engineering skills and the help of volunteers over the past several months to make this dream of former Mayor Kent Smith a reality.

If you would like to make a donation, checks may be made out to the City of Gearhart, P.O. Box 2510, Gearhart, OR 97138. Please reference John Duncan on the memo line.

munity have lost as well.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian’s* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.

The Republicans play loser’s poker

By TIMOTHY EGAN
New York Times News Service

You can’t out-crazy Donald Trump.

You can’t best him in half-truths that sound plausible just because you say them with forceful bluster.

You can’t be scarier to Latinos than the man who threatens to round them up like stray cattle.

And you can’t offend half the population more than the pufferfish-faced plutocrat who dismisses less-attractive females as “fat pigs,” while bragging that he used to sleep with “the top women in the world.”

No, Trump is a singular force, immune to the normal rules that punish a buffoon. Trump has the charlatan’s gift of using superlatives to cover the lack of detail. His opponents do not. In trying to embrace ignorance, make things up and then act offended when someone calls them on it, they just look smaller and less presidential.

It’s a game of loser’s poker, to use Trump’s favorite put-down. And for a party that desperately needs to expand its appeal in a general election, exactly the wrong tack.

By Trump’s rules, facts will get you nowhere. Don’t bother with a plan. And certainly don’t reach out to the majority of Americans who are not afraid of undocumented immigrants, or think that abortion should be safe and legal in most cases, or prefer diplomacy to war.

So it was at Ronald Reagan’s presidential library in the Republican debate, where the sunny optimism of the Gipper was nowhere to be found. Instead, we heard dark stories of auctioned fetus brains, a world falling apart, and promises to kick people off health care. And that was before the leading candidate

suggested that vaccines caused autism.

With California on fire, nobody onstage acknowledged the need for urgent action on climate change. And with the Middle East aflame in another way, the front-runners vowed to be anything but Reaganesque in talking with our enemies. All but the noble failure of Sen. Rand Paul were ready and eager to give war a chance.

The media stampede now is for Carly Fiorina. She’ll get a sizable poll bump and lots of favorable press in coming weeks. She showed dignity when asked to respond to Trump’s put-down of her looks, and she showed a basic mastery of detail that anyone who spends a day Googling world events could acquire.

But she will not wear well; she’s a terrible candidate in the age of income inequality and a battered middle class. Mitt Romney was pummeled for investing in companies that close U.S. plants and ship jobs overseas. Fiorina, as chief executive of Hewlett-Packard, went him one better — firing thousands of people, while being rewarded for failure. She is the embodiment of the unfairness, the rigged game that hurts so many average working people.

Sen. Barbara Boxer of California destroyed Fiorina on this point in 2010, a bad year for Democrats, in a race that Republicans should have done better in. Trump, who makes his living “playing to people’s fantasies,” in his words — casinos, gold-plated apartments, gaudy hotels — was the wrong person to carry this line of attack. Joe Biden, with his Everyman, Uncle Joe demeanor, could paint the dour Fiorina as the boss who slipped away with millions

Timothy Egan

while others lost their homes to foreclosure.

Still, Fiorina tried her hand at loser’s poker, with a seemingly heartfelt account of how Planned Parenthood sells fetal body parts. The problem, as fact-checkers have pointed out, is that the video she described was mostly a fabrication — on her part.

Dr. Ben Carson, who looks like he can’t find his glasses after waking up from a long nap, also threw a few chips in the Trump game. While not calling for the police-state roundup of immigrants that Trump promotes, he advocated “turning off the spigot that dispenses all the goodies so we don’t have people coming here, including employment.”

What’s he talking about? By turning off the spigot, does he mean forcing other people to make the beds in hotel rooms, to mow the lawns in suburbia, to pick the apples in farm country? All Carson did with this non sequitur was give Democrats further evidence to show Hispanics that Republicans treat them like dirt.

Jeb Bush tried to play by Trump’s rules as well. Responding to the hit that he’s low energy — read, low testosterone — he said his Secret Service nickname would be “Eveready — it’s very high energy, Donald.” Snappy! But then he low-fired Trump’s extended palm, bro-joining the hand of the one who has emasculated him. If only he had a little Irish or Sicilian blood in him.

Bush did expose Trump for what should be his greatest weakness, something that’s been largely overlooked by the surface-obsessed press. The guy is a casino operator. He made a lot of money separating suckers from their money. And then, through his bankruptcies, he eventually failed at that — one of the most rigged schemes in the world. He lost in his own game of loser’s poker.

By Trump’s rules, facts will get you nowhere.