

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Jessica Knorzer happily shakes hands with Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge Phil Nelson after completing the county's Drug Court program in 2011. Nelson brought the adult drug court to the area.

Phil Nelson has served us well

Judge ran his drug court on a shoestring and sometimes his own funds

Unless you are a lawyer or you end up in court, judges are little understood, distant figures. But we do elect them. Clatsop County voters have elected Phil Nelson four times to a judgeship.

Judge Nelson has announced he will not run again, putting his position into play.

When he won an open judgeship in 1992, Nelson put together the most creative political ad published in this newspaper over the past 25 years. Against a white full-page backdrop were a vast array of signatures of voters who supported him. It was a dramatic show of support.

Courtroom drama is more prosaic than television portrays it. Phil Nelson has been the essence of an anti-television judge — flat in his demeanor and plain in his delivery. When Nelson has rendered strong judgments, he has not minced words. The Beverage and Harris 2005 sentencing following a horrific murder by abuse case drew stern language from the judge.

Nelson has faced his share of ugliness on the bench. In 1999, 7-year old Ashley Carlson was murdered by 16-year old Patrick Lee Harned. Under Oregon law Harned could not face a death sentence. In an unusual move, the two defense attorneys chose to waive the right to jury both in the guilt and penalty phases. Generally speaking, a judge who defense lawyers are willing to

waive juries in front of is highly regarded.

Nelson found Harned guilty and sentenced him to life without parole.

In his own life, Nelson has encountered considerable adversity. His daughter was the victim in a sex abuse case. Years later she was killed in a traffic accident, to which Nelson was a witness.

Nelson is especially proud of the adult drug court, which he brought to the coast. That court takes people charged with drug and some drug-related felonies and gives them direct supervision by the judge. They are required to follow the directions of a special probation officer, engage in treatment and appear *weekly* before the judge.

Nelson ran the drug court on a shoestring and sometimes with his own funds. He clearly cares deeply about people in the grips of addiction and is willing to give them second and third chances. The court has produced genuine success stories.

Our democracy depends on many things, but especially on the probity of its judges. Phil Nelson has been an example of that, and we are grateful for his judicial career in our midst.

FYI: Clippings from the press of the Pacific Northwest and the nation

The grown-ups take the stage

It was impossible not to feel a sense of relief watching the Democratic debate after months dominated by the Republican circus of haters, ranters and that very special group of king killers in Congress. For those despairing about the future of American politics, here was proof that it doesn't have to revolve around candidates who pride themselves on knowing nothing or believe that governing is all about destroying government.

Civility was a big winner on Tuesday night, and the discussion of real issues was refreshing. But what stood out most was the Democratic Party's

big tent, capable of containing a spectrum of reality-based views. All five candidates — including two refugees from what had been the Republican Party, Lincoln Chafee, a former Republican senator, and Jim Webb, secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration — have real records. They also have real differences on important issues — national security, foreign policy, gun safety, financial reforms. Those differences illuminate the choices that have to be made in governing, some likely to be successful, some ineffective.

— *The New York Times*

GUEST COLUMN

Music's favorite son

By DENISE REED
 For The Daily Astorian

Astoria's favorite son, not just of music, but as a community minded musician and college instructor is Deac Guidi.

Whether you are a new or long-standing member of this community, I hope you have experienced one of his performances.

It's rather unusual to have a concert review three weeks after the event — the complete opera, *Don Giovanni* — but my thinking about it was jogged into writing after seeing a performance of the same concert in Eugene.

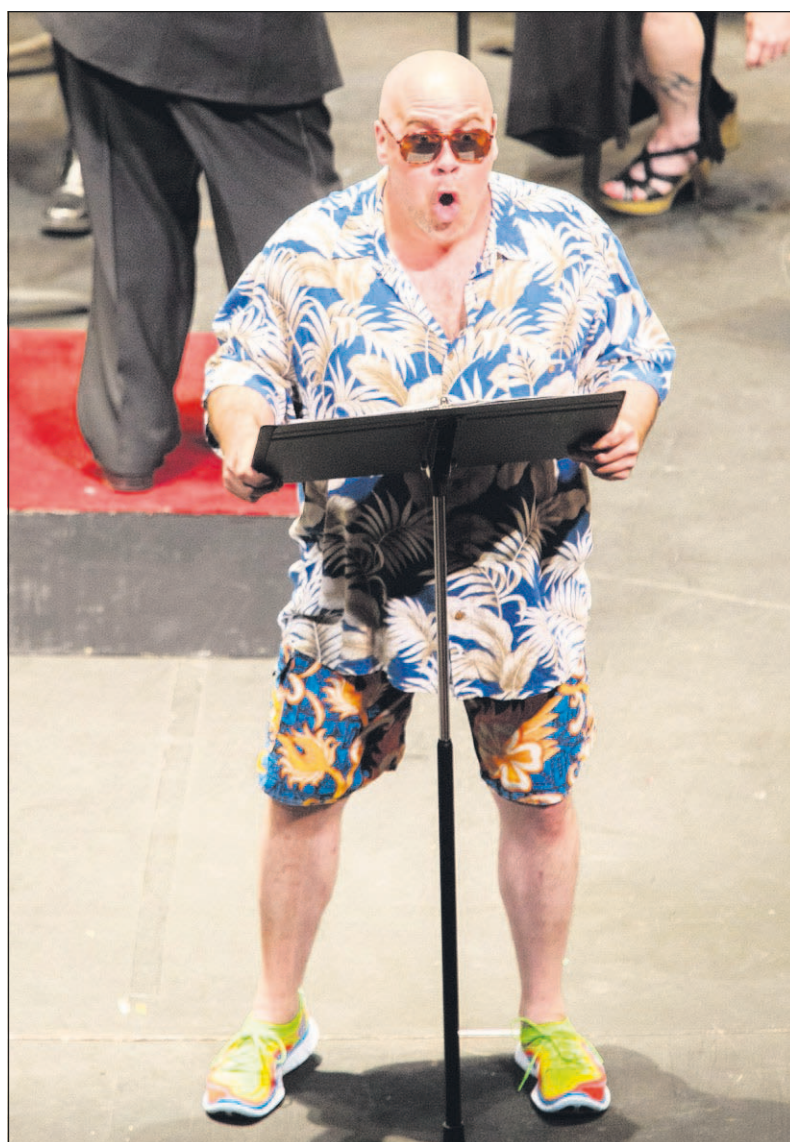
On this past Sunday, North Coast Chorale members participated in a performance of *Don Giovanni* at the First United Methodist Church in Eugene. The principal performers and chorus members are part of Cascadia Concert Opera which makes exceptional and imaginative opera in English, accessible to audiences throughout the Pacific Northwest.

By far, our Astoria venue presented the more accurate performance. The Performing Arts Center is a jewel in our community that needs your support. The size and acoustics of the hall support a production such as this perfectly. The sound is clear and instant, so you are immediately drawn into the action. There is no delay in the sound, which happened in the Eugene venue.

So back to our favorite son and his involvement in both of these performances. I don't know anyone who can enunciate the English language, while singing, as expertly as Guidi. He and the entire troupe have voices that can match those of the major opera houses both here and abroad.



Denise Reed



Submitted Photo

Astoria's Deac Guidi sings at the Astoria Music Festival in 2014.

Guidi has been in this community for a number of years. I first met him in 2008, when the North Coast Chorale considered performing *Elijah*. When I contacted him and heard him speak, I knew he was the one to perform the role of Elijah. He is one of the most talented and expressive individuals I know who lives and works in this community. The Cascadia Opera of Eugene and the Portland Opera recognize and support his talent and ability.

Guidi is performing this weekend at the PAC, our fantastic venue, supporting the Clatsop Community College Foundation. Support the PAC by your attendance and contribute to the College Foundation.

You will also be supporting Guidi and his work as a professional concert artist. He sings music of many genres and this weekend he is joined by other talented singers of our community.

The ticket prices are lower than what you would pay in Portland but the quality of the performances is often much better and the performers are your neighbors, to which you can address your concerns and comments. Lets keep our favorite son. Support the PAC and other groups and individuals who love this community and desire to bring you quality performing arts for your enjoyment.

Denise Reed is the North Coast Chorale director.

Clinton stands her ground in debate

By FRANK BRUNI
 New York Times News Service

I never doubted that Hillary Clinton had many talents.

I just didn't know that seamstress was among them.

There were moments in the first Democratic presidential debate Tuesday night when she threaded the needle as delicately and perfectly as a politician could.

The debate's moderator, Anderson Cooper, noted that she had told some audiences that she was a progressive but extolled her moderation in front of others. Wasn't she just a chameleon, flashing whatever colors suited her at a given moment?

"I'm a progressive, but I'm a progressive who likes to get things done," she said strongly but not stridently. "I know how to find common ground, and I know how to stand my ground." It was a practiced line — so practiced that she used it, somewhat awkwardly, a second time an hour later. But it was also a well-crafted line.

Like her main rival onstage, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, she had complaints about our country. Unlike Sanders, she communicated an unshakable pride in it nonetheless.

Sanders said America should look to Denmark. Clinton countered: "We are not Denmark. I love Denmark. We are the United States of America."

Even when she was confronted anew by her vote in the Senate long ago to authorize the invasion of Iraq, she was neither defiant nor apologetic, steering a smooth midcourse by recalling that at debates in 2008, Barack Obama had attacked her for that. "After the election," she pointed out, "he asked me to become secretary of state. He valued my judgment."

The subject of Iraq caused her less grief than Sanders suffered on gun control, when not only Clinton but also Martin O'Malley, the former Maryland governor, rejected his explanation of votes in the Senate against various bills and his insistence that he was representing rural areas with gun cultures, not a nationwide electorate. It was clumsy, because he presents himself as a creature of pure principle, immune to political convenience.

But on Tuesday night an odd sort of role reversal occurred. For much of the debate, Sanders somehow came across as the embattled incumbent, targeted by the other four candidates, while Clinton came across as the energetic upstart.

He seemed bowed, irascible. She seemed buoyant, effervescent. It was as poised a performance as she has finessed in a long time, and while I've just about given up making predictions about this confounding election — I never thought Donald Trump would last so long, and I never saw Ben Carson coming — I think Clinton benefited more from Tuesday's stage than Sanders did.

She mixed confidence and moments of passion with instances of humor, and her manner was less didactic and robotic than it can often be.

But she was seldom rattled, although the discussion of her use of a home-brewed server for her emails as secretary of state did prompt a visible stiffening of her posture, a conspicuous strain in her smile.



Frank Bruni

Will she ever, ever find language that takes full ownership of her mistake and that puts real flesh on her continued claim that she is being as transparent as possible?

It was possibly her worst moment.

It was perhaps Sanders' best. Surprisingly, he called for an end to talk about the emails, saying there were more important issues to focus on. High-mindedness met unusual campaign-trail generosity and gallantry. Clinton laughed and beamed. They shook hands, and I half expected a hug.

The debate isn't going to change the fortunes of Lincoln Chafee and Jim Webb, who were at the edges of the stage and will remain on the edges of the race. O'Malley might benefit an iota and grew bolder as the night progressed.

Sanders grew redundant, returning with questionable frequency to a single issue — greed and income inequality — that made him sound like a one-note candidate. He is 100 percent right to question corporations and trumpet the plight of the middle class. But he does so as more of a firebrand, calling for a "political revolution," than as someone who can be trusted to make meaningful progress.

Clinton had her own redundancies, saying twice if not thrice as often as was necessary that she would be the first female president. She has gone from sidestepping her gender in 2008 to roaring about it now.

Apart from that, she was mum when silence served her best and fiery when that was the right call — for instance, when she vowed to "take the fight to the Republicans."

And she benefited from the visual contrast when she stood side by side on TV next to Sanders, with his slight hunch, his somewhat garbled style of speech, and a moment when he cupped his hand behind his ear, signaling that he hadn't heard the question.

He evoked yesterday. Despite many decades in the political trenches, she didn't. It was a nifty trick. Turns out she's a bit of a sorceress as well.