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Wyden wins long struggle with NSA

We can have freedoms and defend against terrorists

The best hope for a nation is that it may grow smarter. Learning from the past — not making fatal errors — is essential.

Presidential campaigns often have carried a measure of demagoguery. This year's Republican candidates are setting a record. In the scramble to win the race to war against ISIS, Sen. Lindsay Graham of South Carolina hit a home run by promising to commit 20,000 ground troops to Syria. Sen. Graham has a short memory. The physical and financial cost of U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan was huge and yielded relatively little. So the senator thinks we ought to do that again.

In the midst of such madness, it was refreshing to have news last week that the National Security Agency will cease its sweep of telephone records that began secretly in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks. The USA Freedom Act, which became law in June, forced the NSA to shut down the operation.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden played a leading role over 10 years to bring the NSA's secret operation into the open. In the

wake of the NSA announcement last week, Sen. Wyden brought the recent terrorist attacks on Paris and Mali into the discussion. "After every such attack, politicians who would play to Americans' fears call for liberty to be sacrificed in the name of security. I reject those calls. And as long as Americans continue to demand that their government protect both their security and their liberty, I am confident that our country can deal with these threats without sacrificing our most cherished rights and values."

In standing up for the Constitution and exposing the NSA telephone records dragnet, Wyden emulated his legendary predecessor, Sen. Wayne Morse, who opposed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that led to escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Unlike Morse, Wyden has the collegiality to draw others to his cause. That is why the USA Freedom Act passed the Senate by a vote of 67-32.

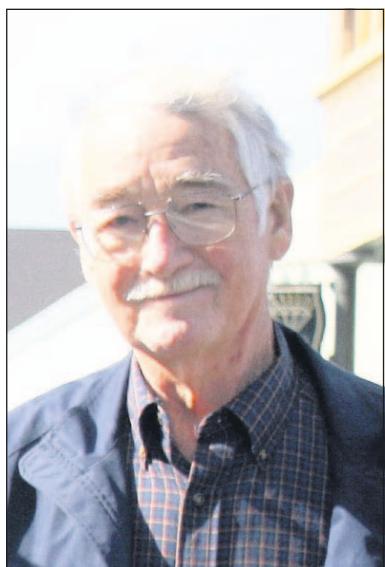
Mitchum's acts are a good example

William "Mitch" Mitchum was a prime example of the kind of passionate proponent Astoria has been so fortunate to attract and retain in recent decades.

Mitchum was a walking advertisement for the U.S. Navy's ability to recruit and nurture leaders. Retiring as a captain at Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Norfolk, Virginia, in the 1990s, he discovered Astoria and moved here to run the Public Works Department.

For Mitch and his wife, Toni, living here could have been a case of culture shock after careers in the penumbra of the nation's capital. Instead, they took to this place's people and ways like salmon migrating to a pure Pacific Northwest river.

After spending 11 years as public works director, Mitchum reinvented himself again as the owner of historic properties. Our Monday story about him summarized some of these successes. Most recently, he was at work helping imagine a new use



Mitch Mitchum

for the old Central School site.

Cyndi Mudge, a fellow community supporter, summed it up: "I just think of Mitch being the ultimate cornerstone volunteer in the community."

It can be said of Mitchum that his achievements will long outlive him. Perhaps his biggest legacy will be the ways in which he showed that one person, acting with enthusiasm and intelligence, can ignite long-lasting positive changes.

Where to write

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Life's a buggy ride for Gearhart's McEwan

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

BY R.J. MARX



Of all the things we can think about to be thankful for at this holiday season, it is the people in our lives who gives us love, support and friendship, especially new friends young and old.

Probably the oldest new friend we met may be the oldest resident in Gearhart.

Most people think so. Bob McEwan celebrated his 93rd birthday this month, making him a living witness to the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War and everything in between.

He is a lifelong Oregonian and has lived in Gearhart for more than half a century. His buggy ride, drawn by trusty donkey friend Pancho down Pacific Way on Sundays and holidays, is famous up and down the North Coast.

We have the privilege of knowing Bob and Pancho, a delightful friendship if there ever was one. Pancho is a Bethlehem donkey — not your common burro, that's for sure. Pancho is blessed with the mark of his breed, a cross along his back. He is enormously social, intelligent and he makes you want to own a donkey of your own.

Bob, accompanied by his black Labrador retriever, Pearl, is a master of the rare art of carriage-driving.

He came with his mother and grandmother from Portland to Seaside, where she managed the Necanicum Inn, "an old, old hostelry in Seaside," McEwan said on his birthday.

His grandmother dabbled in real estate a little bit, he said, and she bought the Gearhart home he now lives in sight unseen. The home, built in 1908, was located on "just a cowpath in the trees," he said.

"Up here, between Cottage and Marion up to the main street, there was nothing there," McEwan remembered. "It was just that rolling sand dunes and grass. Where the golf course is now but from there to what they call Pacific Way — it used to be Sixth Street — it was horse pasture. There were cranberry bogs in Del Mar."

Gearhart School was located where the Trail's End Gallery on Avenue A is now.

As a teenager, he got a job working at the Gearhart Hotel, when it was owned by Portland department store magnate Myron Frank. The hotel, now gone and replaced by condominiums, held conventions for 300, 400 people at a time, McEwan said.

"I was the kind of mess boy in the help's dining room ... that seated about 50 people," he said. "I set it up every day and cleaned off the tables and stuff. It was a big deal then."

A prankster, teenage Bob would ride the dumbwaiter — an elevator with a crank with a rope — from the third floor down to the basement. "It was against the rules to get into that thing, but I always got in and rode myself down from one floor to the next."

His next job was working for the Gearhart Fuel Co. "They sold wood, ice and coal on Gin Ridge and everywhere," he said. "I drove one of their wood trucks around when I was about 12. There were no streets square like there are now, just tracks. You could drive around — no traffic, no police, no nothing. The big houses on what we call Gin Ridge, they're just like they used to be, but there's a lot more added in between."

McEwan drove milk trucks from the dairy in Seaside, delivering to Cannon Beach and Gearhart.

The shelling of Fort Stevens took place in April 1942, but McEwan missed it.

"My grandmother and I were here that night when that happened," he said. "In the morning she said, did you hear those awful explosions last night?"

"I said, 'No, I slept right through it.'"

"She said it sounded like somebody was blasting. It was that loud,



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Bob McEwan travels in style with Pearl on the seat and Pancho at the lead.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Bob McEwan celebrates his 93rd birthday in Gearhart.

'I decided this was the best place anywhere.'

Bob McEwan

I guess."

When he woke up in the early morning to make his deliveries, there were already "extra" editions of newspapers on the stand, telling the Oregon Coast had been shelled by a Japanese submarine.

That afternoon, he was up to see the shells, mostly at DeLauria Beach. "They didn't come very close," he said. "They were on the wrong side of the road."

The fort didn't return the fire because they were afraid they would give away their position, McEwan explained. "They probably couldn't reach it anyway because the range wasn't as good as the submarine's was," he said.

Soon after, he joined the Merchant Marine, and traveled around the world delivering needed supplies until the war ended in 1945. "I was most of the time in the Western Pacific and the South Pacific," he said. "I was in the Persian Gulf and around the world. The Merchant Marine was a big operation, and they covered a lot of ground," he said. "Everything that was hauled overseas, the Merchant Marines took it, so we went everywhere."

McEwan returned home to Gearhart in 1945.

Were you glad to come back?

"Oh, yeah! I was all over the world, and I decided this was the best place anywhere," he said.

After the war, McEwan went to work with the county road de-



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Pancho poses for his close-up.

partment as an engineer for the bridge crew. Those were the days of timber-trestle bridges, before the advent of the concrete bridges built today. Part of his work was installing and replacing culverts. The county purchased a backhoe — "the first one I'd ever seen or anyone had ever seen around here."

In the course of his work, he was made bridge foreman. The backhoe became his stock in trade. "I took over that thing and used it for the culverts, and finally a friend of mine convinced me to buy my own, and I quit the county and bought one. I started in 1956. ... My son runs it."

Today, McEwan still wakes up and goes to work every morning at Laurelwood Farm. He harnesses Pancho to the cart and drives him around Gearhart every Sunday, with Pearl riding shotgun.

As Bob McEwan blows out the candles on "93," a hint of a tear forms at his eye. It's a chocolate cake, his favorite — although his doctor tells him he can "only eat so much."