

Job lies

I recently heard a radio advertisement sponsored by Oregon LNG. The voice said that the proposed Oregon LNG project would create “thousands” of jobs. Thousands? Whoa, really! This facility is proposed, thus job numbers related to it are speculative. I wondered are there any precedents for this claim, are there any liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants operating in the U.S. that can validate this job claim?

It turns out there is a LNG plant in Alaska. It is the Nikiski Plant, on the Kenai Peninsula. It has been in operation, with a short break, for over 40 years. In the re-application process, during the short break, the plant filed paper work with the Department of Energy. On the application, the Nikiski Plant, operated by Conoco Phillips, stated that it “employed 50 direct employees.” (Aaron Selbig, KBBI, Homer, Alaska)

Fifty employees, not thousands, as purported in the advertisement. There would be some short-term positions in addition, during the construction phase. Even counting short term positions, thousands is a grandiose number.

Further, not all of those 50 long-term employees would be local hires. If the Nikiski plant is an example of what happens in actual practice — and remember it has been operating for over 40 years — Oregon LNG would not bring a large number of good long-term jobs to our local area.

In addition, there are a number of environmental concerns with the proposal, not the least of which is the location. Building on a landfill composed of dredged river sediments is not generally considered a good idea. I have not asked the local planning authorities; however, I would venture a guess that the Skpanon Peninsula would not be considered a safe place to build a single-family dwelling.

If it is not a safe place for a house, why would anyone consider it a safe place for the processing, storage, and dispensing of flammable products?

As a resident of Hammond, I want other Warrenton-Hammond residents to consider this information. The Oregon LNG project would not bring us the “thousands” of promised jobs, and it would present safety hazards. Oregon LNG is not a good fit for Warrenton.

KATHLEEN ADAMS
Hammond

Stop the whistle

I am writing to express my disappointment over the starling whistle at the Columbia House condos not far from my home. I wrote about

Grateful for our first responders

On Christmas Day, as I sat in my living room enjoying the holiday, there were a couple of instances where I heard sirens go by outside. That in itself is not unusual, as I live two blocks above the roundabout, and the sound of passing sirens is very common. What hit me very hard was an extreme feeling of gratefulness for the people in the emergency vehicles.

While I feel that none of us takes our first responders for granted, I felt that during the holidays we really owe them some special words of appreciation. So on behalf of the general population, I want to wish all of the emergency medical technicians, drivers, police, firefighters, doctors, nurses and any other responders I may have missed a very Merry

Christmas and Happy New Year.

Plus, a special thanks to those who gave up their holiday so the rest of us could enjoy ours in a safe, peaceful, and worry-free manner. These words don't seem to be enough, and they're a little late, but it's the best I can do. With all my heart, thank you.

WILLIAM BELL
Astoria

this a year or two ago, whenever it was they did this the last time.

Every evening between approximately 4 and 6 p.m., someone at Columbia House activates a whistle intended to drive away the large number of starlings that gather underneath their building, which is built on pilings over the water about two blocks from my home. It has also happened occasionally at about midday, but usually just in the early evening.

They started doing this again about two weeks ago. At first, it was for just very brief periods. Now, the length of each whistle blast and the total duration of the exercise seems to have grown considerably.

I don't doubt that there is an excellent reason for the Columbia House owners to want or need to drive away the starlings from under their building.

However, I found it very annoying the first time they did this, and it is no less so for me now. I work in a home office. I find it difficult to concentrate on my work when their whistle is sounding. It is a shrill and grating sound, nothing at all like the long throaty sighs of the great ships that pass by our window.

But more than the annoyance I experience from the sound itself is the irritation I experience over the thoughtlessness and, in my opinion, the rudeness of the Columbia House owners relative to this issue. It is an irritation that begins as a simmering anger and builds to a monumental rage. I end up beside myself with distraction.

“How dare they do that?” I think.

Perhaps the Columbia House folks are to be credited for trying to deal with the starlings in a humane way. It is not, however, humane for me and the few of my neighbors who have mentioned this as an irritation for them, as well.

I think what they are doing is a public nuisance and that they should be prevented from doing this. I can sympathize with their need, but they need to find a solution that does not impinge on the peace of mind of their neighbors.

PAUL HAIST
Astoria

Kudos for panel

Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery had one of its longest stays in the Pacific Northwest at the little-known Point William campsite at today's Tongue Point in November-December 1805.

An interpretive panel highlighting the campsite has recently been erected on the east end of the Astoria Riverwalk at Alderbrook Lagoon, along with a commemorative bench honoring Keith G. Hay, co-author of a landmark study commissioned in 1962 by the Interior Department's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to define what later became the National Lewis and Clark Historic Trail.

The monument is stunning thanks to the 12 students from the Tongue Point Job Corps Center who prepared the site and assisted with the installation. Combined, they contributed 168 hours. Their generous donation, which helped us secure a grant from the Lewis and Clark Trail Stewardship Endowment, made this project possible. I also want to acknowledge the outstanding support of Jonah Dart-McLean, maintenance supervisor at Astoria Parks and Recreation.

With their help, more than 40,000 visitors and residents who use the Riverwalk annually will have greater insight into the Lewis and Clark story.

MARK JOHNSON
President, Oregon Chapter, Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
Portland

Make it even

The editorial board at *The Daily Astorian* is right — nothing much will change about dark money and campaign finance laws “until voters realize political spending determines who wins and loses in our economy, courts and corridors of power” (“Power goes to the political spenders,” Dec. 28).

The dark money riders on the budget package will hamper a functioning democracy. Blocking the IRS and the Securities and Exchange Commission from making new rules to disclose anonymous campaign contributions

means that voters will not be empowered to know what special interests and corporations are backing candidates and their positions in the 2016 elections. Without knowing where the money supporting these candidates is coming from, we cannot make informed decision at the ballot box.

That said, disclosing political spending is not enough. We need to go one step further by amplifying the voices of average voters to combat “the groups that are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to influence our federal elections.”

One way to do this is through the Congressional bill, The Government by the People Act (HR 20). This bill uses public matching funds to augment the impact of small donors. This is a way to help make sure that “all citizens get an even break in elections,” not just those giving unlimited sums of money.

MADDIE
KUSCH-KAVANAGH
Portland

Reinstate Balzer

I first met Mike Balzer about 15 years ago, when we were both police officers. I was immediately impressed by his sense of community and dedication to the people he served. I noticed that even while working as a police officer, he was most proud of his service with the fire district. I was pleased when he was promoted to Fire Chief after serving as a firefighter for over 30 years. As a Cannon Beach resident, it was comforting to know that a man of his experience and competency was heading the department.

Upon returning from vacation in mid-October, I was shocked to hear of his dismissal and the manner in which it was conducted. The board has stated that it was a personnel matter and would not comment further.

Over the years I have observed Balzer's pride in, and commitment to the fire district and the firefighters who worked with him. Under Chief Balzer's direction, the district opened a new station in Arch Cape, acquired a new brush truck for fighting wildfires and replaced an aging

ladder truck. Chief Balzer's management of the Bistro fire several years ago no doubt saved much of the downtown business district.

A board member indicated that Balzer was very strong operationally, but not administratively. I highly doubt that the alleged lack of administrative skill was sufficient to merit his termination. Until the board can demonstrate that it was, Chief Balzer should be reinstated.

ERIC REITER
Tolovana Park

Music, dementia

We were very pleased to read the article written by Kathryn Houghton in the Dec. 9 paper regarding music re-engaging the minds of dementia patients (“Music re-engages minds of dementia patients,” *The Daily Astorian*).

There have been multiple articles in *The Daily Astorian* over the last months raising awareness of the growing population of people with dementia. By the year 2025, the number of Oregonians living with this disease is expected to rise from 76,000 to 110,000 (Alzheimer's Association).

Since opening Clatsop Care Memory Community in July of this year, we have used music therapy to create well-being in our residents diagnosed with dementia. The music not only brings happiness but stimulates the brain as well. Our activities director has loaded several iPods for residents, depending on their musical interests throughout the decades. This information is captured in a “Life Story,” which families provide before their loved ones move in.

We are also able to offer weekly sing-a-longs with local musicians, who provide live entertainment. A grant has recently been secured to offer bimonthly concerts throughout 2016 for our residents. Live music makes them “come alive,” witnessed in singing, dancing, clapping, and laughing.

It is wonderful to know that more attention is being paid to this growing disease and that there are ways to cultivate joy for those afflicted. Music is an import-

ant way to connect to that part of the brain that is being taken by disease. This not only benefits the person with dementia, but it also benefits those of us who choose to take care of them.

MINDY STOKES
Administrator
JO BANTA
Administrative assistant
Clatsop Care Memory
Community

Hard choices

Concerning the story about Roberta Morgan on Dec. 14 (“At adult foster home, a crash course in responsibility,” *The Daily Astorian*):

First off is a correction to the story concerning one of the many reported incidents. This one occurred on May 22, 2013. In this case Ms. Morgan hit our stopped vehicle on the passenger side door, and the Astoria Police Department press release on May 22 stated: “While the vehicle was stopped the motorized wheelchair exited the curb and struck the side of the Scion. It did not appear that Morgan slowed prior to exiting the sidewalk and entering the roadway.”

So what is the probability that someone would have eight traffic/pedestrian accidents in a two-year period, and five this year alone? Based on this number, how many near misses have there been? This would suggest that her behavior is creating the potentially lethal scenarios.

While we all have a shared duty to watch out for fellow citizens, why are the people truly responsible not doing their part to prevent this? This includes Ms. Morgan, her family, the foster home, and the state of Oregon. People should be responsible for their own actions.

If Ms. Morgan does not have the requisite judgment and ability to operate a motorized vehicle (yes the police described it as a motorized), then the people responsible for her care need to do their jobs, even if it means some hard choices.

As to the point of denying Ms. Morgan her independence, the article described alternatives to allow her to enjoy those activities, while not risking her life or the safety of the public. I do not understand the assertion that somehow the city of Astoria or drivers are at fault.

I would hate to see the next *Daily Astorian* article about Ms. Morgan telling the story of a more serious injury or her death, and having some poor driver traumatized, because we were more concerned about her “independence” than her safety.

RICHARD WOLF
Astoria

Space: The visionaries take over

By CHARLES
KRAUTHAMMER
Washington Post Writers Group

Fractured and divided as we are, on one thing we can agree: 2015 was a miserable year. The only cheer was provided by Lincoln Chafee and the Pluto flyby (two separate phenomena), as well as one seminal aeronautical breakthrough.

On Dec. 21, Elon Musk's SpaceX, after launching 11 satellites into orbit, returned its 15-story booster rocket, upright and intact, to a landing pad at Cape Canaveral. That's a \$60 million mountain of machinery — recovered. (The traditional booster rocket either burns up or disappears into some ocean.)

The reusable rocket has arrived. Arguably, it arrived a month earlier when Blue Origin, a privately owned outfit created by Jeff Bezos (Amazon CEO and owner of The Washington Post) launched and landed its own booster rocket, albeit for a suborbital flight. But whether you attribute priority to Musk or Bezos, the two events together mark the inaugura-

tion of a new era in spaceflight.

Musk predicts that the reusable rocket will reduce the cost of accessing space a hundredfold. This depends, of course, on whether the wear and tear and stresses of the launch make the refurbishing prohibitively expensive. Assuming it's not, and assuming Musk is even 10 percent right, reusability revolutionizes the economics of spaceflight.

Which both democratizes and commercializes it. Which means space travel has now slipped the surly bonds of government — presidents, Congress, NASA bureaucracies. Its future will now be driven far more by a competitive marketplace with its multiplicity of independent actors, including deeply motivated, financially savvy and visionary entrepreneurs.

To be sure, the enterprise is not entirely free of government. After all, SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket landed on a Cape Canaveral pad formerly used to launch Air Force Atlas rockets. Moreover, initial financing for these ventures already depends in part on NASA contracts, such as resupplying the space station.

That, however, is not much different from the growth of aviation a century ago. It hardly lived off airshow tickets or Channel-crossing

prize money. What really propelled the infant industry was government contracts. For useful things like mail — and bomb — delivery.

The first and most visible consequence of the new entrepreneurial era will be restoring America as a spacefaring nation. Yes, I know we do spectacular robotic explorations. But our ability to toss humans into space disappeared when NASA retired the space shuttle — without a replacement.

To get an astronaut into just low Earth orbit, therefore, we have to hitch a ride on Russia's Soyuz with its 1960s technology. At \$82 million a pop. Yet, today, two private companies already have contracts with NASA to send astronauts to the space station as soon as 2017.

The real prize, however, lies beyond Earth orbit. By now, everyone realizes that the space station was a colossal mistake, a white elephant in search of a mission. Its main

contribution is to study the biological effects of long-term weightlessness. But we could have done that in Skylab, a modest space station that our political betters decided four decades ago to abandon.

With increasing privatization, such decisions will no longer be exclusively Washington's. When President Barack Obama came into office, the plan was to return to the moon by 2020. A year later, he decided we should go to an asteroid instead. Why? Who knows.

Today future directions are being set by private companies with growing technical experience and competing visions. Musk is fixated on colonizing Mars, Bezos on seeing “millions of people living and working in space,” and Richard Branson on space tourism by way of Virgin Galactic (he has already sold 700 tickets to ride at \$250,000 each). And Moon Express, another private enterprise, is not even in-

terested in hurling about clumsy, air-breathing humans. It is bent on robotic mining expeditions to the moon. My personal preference is a permanent manned moon base, which would likely already exist had our politicians not decided to abandon the moon in the early 1970s.

We have no idea which plan is more likely to succeed and flourish. But the beauty of privatization is that we don't get just one shot at it. Our trajectory in space will now be the work of a functioning market of both ideas and commerce. It no longer will hinge on the whims of only tangentially interested politicians.

Space has now entered the era of the Teslas, the Edisons and the Wright brothers. From now on, they will be doing more and more of the driving. Which means we are actually — finally — going somewhere again.



Charles
Krauthammer