

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

10 years ago this week — 2006

O hear us, when we cry to thee,
For those in peril on the sea

— The Navy Hymn

The death of Columbia River bar pilot Kevin Murray reminded us how utterly dangerous that occupation can be. In the dark, Murray was descending a ship's ladder when he fell into the ocean. His body was recovered two days later.

The bar pilots earn their living by virtue of seafaring experience, as well as courage in the face of danger.

Some years ago, upriver shipping interests quibbled with the need for specialized pilots at the river's mouth. Those commercial interests also griped about paying higher pilotage fees in order to support a helicopter operation for the pilots.

That tactical maneuver, which was all about money, now seems a bit trite. Anyone who wants to make light of the passage across the Columbia River Bar hasn't been here during this season.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski toured the scenes of two North Coast storm-related calamities Friday.

The governor met with Sheryl and John Toftemark at their slide-damaged home in south Astoria. Earlier he viewed the dike in Knappa breached by high water two weeks ago.

On Friday, Kulongoski declared a state of disaster in 24 Oregon counties, including Clatsop County, setting in motion the state's request for federal assistance for communities harmed by slides, flooding and other problems caused by the heavy rains.

Although the Port of Astoria's lease with Skipanon Natural Gas has a clause stating the lease can be ended if the company files for bankruptcy, that clause can't be enforced, port attorney Heather Reynolds told port commissioners Tuesday.

"We do have a provision in our lease that says if they file bankruptcy we can terminate the lease, but really we can't because the bankruptcy code prohibits it," Reynolds said at a workshop meeting.

50 years ago — 1966

Suppression of the Astoria bridge foghorn was postponed at least a day Monday when Pacific Northwest Bell failed to receive a new switch in time.

So, although it was a clear night Monday night, the horn sounded at 10 second intervals all night long and into the day.

The Astoria bridge, scheduled for opening in August This year, is 94 percent complete, project engineer Robert Ellison of Oregon Highway department told Rotarians Monday.

The state supreme court ruled today that most Washington ocean beaches belong to the public, not the adjacent property owner.

The court overturned a Pacific County Superior Court decision which could have resulted in erection of "private property" signs along most of the state's beach sand.

The beaches in question were built up by the action of tides over the years. Under a law passed in 1901, private property lines were frozen at the water line as it existed in 1889, the year Washington became a state.

Beach property built up after statehood, technically called accreted land, was reserved by the 1901 law for the public. In some places, the accreted beach is as much as three-quarters of a mile wide.

75 years ago — 1941

The Recreation Committee today mulled over preliminary plans for a \$100,000 Regatta pavilion and recreation center, to be located between Commercial and Exchange streets opposite Gyro Field.

Early in February the New England Fish company will begin canning of crabs at its Pillar Rock plant where 40 cannery workers will be given employment in the new industry.

No sharks and bottom fish have been found in Willapa bay by the trawler Washington of Ilwaco, it was reported here today.

It is believed here by trawl fishermen that sharks and groundfish abound in Willapa harbor at certain times of the year, but are obviously gone from the bay now.

"Chances for Astoria and the northwest to obtain naval construction contracts for mine and coast defense craft are excellent," declared Joe Dyer, manager of the Astoria Marine Construction company, who returned from Seattle yesterday with Bill Callan, Astoria Chamber of Commerce secretary.

The Astoria port commission Tuesday night passed a resolution, asking the U.S. Navy to construct a drydock at Astoria for servicing naval vessels and commercial ships frequently calling here after having difficulties at sea.

Armed men threaten stability that average people value

IF YOU LISTEN TO Republican presidential candidates, you get the idea that America is going to hell. In fact, it already may be there.

But these detractors forget the quality that most Americans appreciate and which foreigners envy. The quality is stability. There is enormous value in knowing that when you wake up the power will be on, the streets will be clear for travel, currency will be valid and no one will depose the government in city hall, the statehouse or Washington. In a word it is predictability. Without that, you can't have a developed economy and a host of things that flow from that.

A colleague who is following the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge situation points out that the real business of this protest is not its overt message about ranching. It is really about the parallel universe that a host of right-wing groups have built for themselves.

They are tone deaf in their disregard for the people who live in the county they have invaded. All of those occupiers flashing weapons on their hips and in their hands creates a tense situation that wears on a community.

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IN HIS REVEALING REPORT from inside the armed protest movement at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, John Sepulvado of Oregon Public Broadcasting described the soldier wannabe for whom this protest is kind of a fantasy camp. When those of us who are veterans see these guys, we stifle an urge to suggest that they could enlist and see the real thing.

Sepulvado also described a former serviceman inside the protest movement. He was depicted enforcing a sort of discipline on the wannabes.

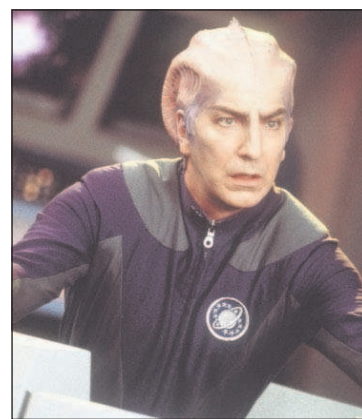
That reminded me of a man who became scoutmaster of our Pendleton Boy Scout troop about 12 years after the end of World War II. He tried to relieve those days by lining us up for

'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
'To talk of many things;
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing wax —
Of cabbages — and kings —'

Through the Looking-glass



of Cabbages and Kings



Murray Close/DreamWorks
In "Galaxy Quest," Rickman played a frustrated Shakespearean actor who finds fame on sci-fi television series.

a military-style inspection. It killed morale and it killed the troop.

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IN THE WAKE OF ALAN Rickman's death last week, my wife and I watched "Galaxy Quest" (1999), in which he teams up with Tim Allen and Signourney Weaver. Mourning Rickman's passing, Joe Morgenstern, film critic of *The Wall Street Journal* said "Galaxy Quest" is one of the funniest movies made.

The plot is delicious, with space aliens seeking out the television actors who do a low-budget "Star Trek" kind of series.

If you need a mood elevator on one of these dark cold nights, Neal has this comedy at Video Horizons.

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THE NATIONAL BASKETBALL Association has given the guns debate a whole new look. In a series of public service announcements,

If you need humor on a dark, cold night, this Alan Rickman movie is the ticket.

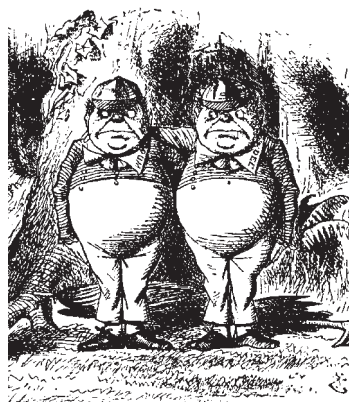
players such as Stephen Curry talk about what gun violence does to families and neighborhoods.

It is a bold move. Margaret Talbot in *The New Yorker* noted the courage of the NBA players. "The discussion that the gun lobby and the Republican candidates who are eager to defend it do not want to have is the one about making guns less lethal."

The NBA ads direct viewers to Everytown for Gun Safety, the group financed by Michael Bloomberg.

Wrote Talbot: "We didn't outlaw cigarettes, or eliminate cars, but we have reduced the harm they cause through laws and innovations based on research, and through campaigns that changed norms."

— S.A.F.



Donald Trump's existential pickle

By FRANK BRUNI

New York Times News Service

If your very candidacy and identity rest on your supposed talent for victory, can you survive a defeat?

Can you continue to call yourself a winner if you've been a loser — and if "loser" is your favorite way of closing the book on someone, your final word, the workhorse in your brimming lexicon of slurs, exiting your mouth so reflexively that it's essentially your exhalation, your carbon dioxide: "loser," "loser," "loser."

Donald Trump has a problem that the other candidates for the Republican nomination don't. He's put an obstacle in his path that they haven't. He doesn't merely assert dominance. He claims something close to omnipotence. (Remember that laughable physician's report?)

Neither his image nor his ego leaves any room for a setback, any allowance for second place. And as Iowa draws near and several polls suggest the strong possibility that Ted Cruz will finish ahead of him there, it's time to talk about what that would mean for a self-enamored emperor who pretty much insists on his own perfection — and who has built his brand on it.

At that point, Trump would no longer be a brilliant exception to the laws of political gravity. He'd be someone whose lax management of his Iowa operation was laid bare, whose basic competence was in dispute. He'd be one of many exhausted soldiers, girding himself for a muddy slog. That's not the path he plotted, the myth he's selling. That's not how he's rigged.

Other candidates can rack up a few disappointments. They haven't made their cases by pointing to their percentages, their ratings, their crowds. They don't draw such a sharp, unforgiving line between winners and losers. They don't equate being on top with being the best.

Trump does. Incessantly. It's his worldview, his philosophy, his morality, his tauntology.

He's inverted the usual political logic. Typically, candidates cite their qualifications as the reason that voters should affirm them. Trump asserts that he's qualified because voters have affirmed him, or at least because they seem poised to.

Challenged on his policies (which don't really exist) or his credentials (which are dubiously applicable to the presidency), he whips out his poll numbers as proof of his worthiness. Sometimes he whips them out just for fun. And as he holds them high, he makes the argument that he must have good ideas, good sense and good preparation. After all, he's winning!

But by that reasoning, losing wouldn't be just a fluke, just a failure of the body politic to recognize and reward majesty when they behold it. No, it would be evidence that he's inferior or at least unexceptional. It would destroy the brand's foundation.

His bid for the presidency is all triumphalism, all superlatives. It rejects any humility. It forbids any humbling — especially the first time that voting becomes actual instead of theoretical and Iowans crown a champ.

When he kicked off his campaign from the gilded throne of Trump Tower last June, he didn't merely say that he'd create jobs.

"I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created," he decreed, emphasizing a divine patrimony.

On the day when he and his hair move into the White House, "unbelievable" blessings will rain down on this parched land of ours. He will be "the best thing that ever happened to women," "the best security president."

And did you know that he has "the world's greatest memory," by his own estimation?

"It's one thing everyone agrees on," he added, which is wrong, because many of us at *The Times* don't agree at all, especially not after the most recent Republican debate, on Thursday night. He was asked then about his proposal, made during a recent meeting with the newspaper's editorial board, for a 45 percent tax on Chinese goods brought into this country. And his magic powers of recollection eluded him.

"That's wrong," he said. "They were wrong. It's *The New York Times*. They are always wrong."

Except we weren't, not about this. A transcript and an audio recording of the meeting unequivocally demonstrate as much.

We're probably losers anyway. That's the designation he assigns to



Frank Bruni

anyone who fails to genuflect in his presence.

He has meted it out promiscuously — and diversely. The megastar Cher is a "loser." So are mogul Mark Cuban, basketball player Chris Jackson, war hero John McCain.

The ranks of talk show hosts, journalists, pundits and political consultants are especially robust with losers.

ers, including Ana Navarro, Bill Maher, Howard Stern and Karl Rove, who's not just a "loser" but "dopey" and a "total fool," as Trump tweeted. His testy Twitter feed is his Hall of Shame. It's where the losers are rounded up and publicly flogged.

And his go-to arguments for why someone is a loser, a dope or a dummy is that he or she has made erroneous predictions or been repudiated by the ratings, the marketplace, the audience. A television personality is a loser if not all that many viewers tune in.

So what if not all that many Iowans turn out for Trump? What if, at the least, more of them choose Cruz? How can Trump dismiss the precise kind of judgment and measurement with which he dismisses everyone else?

Lately he's started to hedge, alternating prophecies that he'll win Iowa with statements that he hopes to. It's "a little too close for comfort," he told voters in Cedar Falls last week. I'll say.

For other candidates a loss is a part of the process, a prompt for self-examination, a cause for a reset and maybe an embarrassment. For Trump it's an existential crisis. Who is he if he can't look down on all of his rivals? What does he become if he has to look up to one of them, especially if the one is a natural-born irritant like Cruz?

"Comeback kid" won't fit Trump. It's a middle seat in coach for a titan with his own planes — plural. (His own helicopters, too.) If he's wedged into it, he'll come unglued. I mean, more than he already has.

When he appeared on the late-night talk show "Jimmy Kimmel Live" last month, Kimmel teased him by claiming to have written a children's book for Trump. Its title? "Winners Aren't Losers."

This is my point, and this is Trump's pickle. If Iowa's voters don't swoon for him, it erases the whole gaudy prelude to that moment. He ceases to be the best, the most, the greatest. Trump will have been trumped, which means he's not the same Trump at all.