

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

In the 1940s and '50s, George apparently was the go-to guy when something needed to get done. "Let George Do It," a common expression those days, was the title of a 1940 British comedy and an American radio show that aired from 1946 to 1954.

Who that first George was, whether King George, George Washington or a caveman named George, is shrouded in the mists of time.

But the can-do attitude he stood for lives on in this community in the form of the George Award, presented annually by the Astoria-Warrenton area Chamber of Commerce.

Since its inception in 1969, the award — for outstanding and selfless community service, has gone to just one individual each year. On Saturday three people were honored: Wendy Berezay for the Tapiola Playground project; and Donna Holmstedt and Barbara Roberts for the annual Christmas Basket food program and Wishing Tree gift program.

After laboring to assemble the new Fort Clatsop, workers are now taking it all apart.

Craftsmen from Mount Rainier National Park working at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds finished the "enlisted men's quarters" half of the log replica Saturday. They are now tagging the individual logs and disassembling the structure to ready the logs for transport to a lumber yard in Hillsboro, where they will be pressure-treated.

The workers, recruited for their experience building log structures, are on schedule to have the new replica in place at Fort Clatsop park by March 23, when the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park will hold a dedication ceremony on the 200th anniversary of the explorer's departure from Fort Clatsop.

50 years ago — 1966

Astoria, historically a basketball hotbed, has been assigned the Amateur Athletic Union's major Oregon basketball tournament of 1966, a sport event that will bring eight top independent basketball teams of the northwest to the community.

It is a chance to prove once again that Astoria is a top basketball town, capable of entertaining suitably major basketball events, as we have done in the past.

Announcement of this event comes at a time when Astoria High's successful basketball season has brought public interest in the game to a high pitch. The Fishermen, proud possessors of one of the best all-time basketball records in the state, are fighting for the Metropolitan League title and a chance at the state tournament. Best of luck to Pete Bryant and his boys as they maintain the school's great basketball reputation!



Laying of concrete deck on north spans of the Astoria bridge continued this week.

Light sleepers had their troubles all over town, except the south side, Tuesday night.

The Astoria bridge foghorn, which went under control of a switch devised by the telephone company last weekend, was back on full-time operation Tuesday night.

There was trouble in the wiring circuits. Linemen Wednesday restored the circuits so it was again under control of the switch.

But meanwhile from the Alderbrook district came a few complaints that there was a clattering and clanking all night long, out on the river.

Sources of the noise was the dredge McCurdy, which has gone to work pumping material out of the ship channel and pumping it through a pipeline into the lagoons behind the railway line in east Astoria.

75 years ago — 1941

"Calling car No. 2! Officer Hansen! Calling car No. 2! Officer Hansen! Go to Hellberg drug corner! Man there arguing with bronze doughboy about pass word! Investigate! May be something he ate! That is all!"

And so it might go far into the night with Astoria's brand new three-way police radio system. Actually, it doesn't, of course. It's a serious business Chief John Acton and his boys conduct in protecting the citizens of Astoria and their property and the new radio transmission system is no playing. It's the last word in equipment of its kind. Until its installation in December, Astoria was the only major town in the state of Oregon without at least a one-way radio system.

Aviation committee of the Chamber of Commerce is undertaking a campaign to obtain civilian pilot training for the Clatsop airport and wants names of 200 interested and eligible persons immediately, Neil Morfitt, committee chairman, announced Saturday.

Men or women aged 19 to 26, single or married, physically fit citizens and residents of Oregon, are urged to contact the airport or chamber office at once if interested in taking such work.

Morfitt said the first unit to be formed if the program is obtained would include 49 persons who would take two months of ground school work at a cost of \$200 to the government.

Otter Creek rocks the Liberty Theater

THE FAMILY OF SINGERS is a staple in the music genres of country western and bluegrass. The iconic family was the Carters — Mother Maybelle Carter and her daughters who included June Carter Cash. When we lived in Washington, D.C. — at the heart of bluegrass country — we saw the Whites — Buck, Sharon and Cheryl — and the Forester Sisters, all five of them.

The singular aspect of the family singing group is how the vocal timbre of sisters, for instance, meshes in a way that duos or trios of unrelated people do not.

Otter Creek — performing last Saturday night at the Liberty Theater — were a mother (Mary), father (Peter) and three daughters. The Danzigs (aka Otter Creek) produced an exquisite vocal sound. Their musicianship was some of the best of any genre that I've heard in the Liberty's 10 years of performances.

The Astoria contractor Jared Rickenbach brought the Danzigs to the Liberty. He is their cousin.

Otter Creek sang staples of the bluegrass repertoire such as "I'll Fly Away" and "Down in the River to Pray."

People who can pick up multiple instruments are a wonder. Peter played an array of stringed instruments, including a dulcimer. Mary played a violin and viola.

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SPEAKING OF THE LIBERTY, its Readers Theater is back with a production of *A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around Talking*. If past productions are a predictor, this will be a good show. Susie Brown and Toni Ilander play the white chicks. You have four opportunities to take it in: tonight and Thursday as well as Feb. 3 and 4.

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WHEN I VISITED THE Soviet Union in the fall of 1977, I saw Verdi's opera *La Traviata* performed in the Maly Kirov of Leningrad. The most striking thing about this small European opera house was its ornamentation. Over the stage proscenium was the hammer and

'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



Courtesy of Otter Creek
 Otter Creek's Peter and Mary Danzig with their instruments.

cycle, looking like it had been there from the beginning. In the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution, those communist symbols had supplanted the double eagle of the czarist, Romanov autocracy. One despotism had replaced another, but the transition of icons was seamless.

The Soviets were masters at putting graphic artistry in service of propaganda and state legitimacy. Ed Rothstein, arts critic of *The Wall Street Journal* last Friday explained why the arts are so essential to totalitarian regimes.

"As the Soviet Union recedes further into the past, it is worth recalling one of the great lessons it imposed on the 20th century: Culture matters, and culture in the face of tyranny matters even more. It matters because art affects how we think and feel, altering our ideas and convictions. That is why, under tyranny, it is so closely controlled."

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THE PEOPLE'S ARTIST: Prokofiev's *Soviet Years* (2008) contains a graphic description of how

Otter Creek's musicianship was among the best a Liberty Theater audience has seen.

that cultural control worked in Stalinist Russia. The author, Simon Morrison describes how Stalin would suddenly appear in an empty box in a Moscow concert hall. The dictator would be watched intently by the audience. If Stalin did not return after the intermission, a chill would fall on the composer and his wife. Weeks later, a dismissive review would appear in a small Russian arts periodical, and everyone would know who wrote it.

Rothstein of the *WSJ* refers to this as "the executioner-style vetting of the Stalin era."

In commentary that accompanies a recording of Prokofiev's panoramic opera *War and Peace*, it is noted that following its 1943 premiere the work received a lukewarm Kremlin response.

I had the good fortune to see Prokofiev's massive work in a beautiful production at the Bolshoi Opera House. The tepid reception the Moscow audience gave the work that night puzzled me. Now I understand. Three decades on, Stalin's iron hand chilled the opera house.

—S.A.F.



Michigan's great stink is America's

By PAUL KRUGMAN
New York Times News Service

In the 1850s, London, the world's largest city, still didn't have a sewer system.

Waste simply flowed into the Thames, which was as disgusting as you might imagine.

But conservatives, including the prime minister, opposed any effort to remedy the situation. After all, such an effort would involve increased government spending and, they insisted, infringe on personal liberty and local control.

It took the Great Stink of 1858, when the stench made the Houses of Parliament unusable, to produce action.

But that's all ancient history. Modern politicians, no matter how conservative, understand that public health is an essential government role. Right? No, wrong — as illustrated by the disaster in Flint, Michigan.

What we know so far is that in 2014 the city's emergency manager — appointed by Rick Snyder, the state's Republican governor — decided to switch to an unsafe water source, with lead contamination and more, in order to save money. And it's becoming increasingly clear that state officials knew that they were damaging public health, putting children in particular at risk, even as they stonewalled both residents and health experts.

This story — America in the 21st century, and you can trust neither the water nor what officials say about it — would be a horrifying outrage even if it were an accident or an isolated instance of bad policy. But it isn't. On the contrary, the nightmare in Flint reflects the resurgence in

American politics of exactly the same attitudes that led to London's Great Stink more than a century and a half ago.

Let's back up a bit, and talk about the role of government in an advanced society.

In the modern world, much government spending goes to social insurance programs — things like Social Security, Medicare and so on, that are supposed to protect citizens from the misfortunes of life. Such spending is the subject of fierce political debate, and understandably so. Liberals want to help the poor and unlucky, conservatives want to let people keep their hard-earned income, and there's no right answer to this debate, because it's a question of values.

There should, however, be much less debate about spending on what Econ 101 calls public goods — things that benefit everyone and can't be provided by the private sector. Yes, we can differ over exactly how big a military we need or how dense and well-maintained the road network should be, but you wouldn't expect controversy about spending enough to provide key public goods like basic education or safe drinking water.

Yet a funny thing has happened as hard-line conservatives have taken over many U.S. state governments. Or actually, it's not funny at all. Not surprisingly, they have sought to cut social insurance spending on the poor. In fact, many state governments dislike spending on the poor so much that they are rejecting a Medicaid expansion that wouldn't cost them anything, because it's federally financed. But what we also see is extreme penny pinching on public goods.



Paul Krugman

It's easy to come up with examples. Kansas, which made headlines with its failed strategy of cutting taxes in the expectation of an economic miracle, has tried to close the resulting budget gap largely with cuts in education. North Carolina has also imposed drastic cuts on schools. And in New Jersey, Chris Christie famously

canceled a desperately needed rail tunnel under the Hudson.

Nor are we talking only about a handful of cases. Public construction spending as a share of national income has fallen sharply in recent years, reflecting cutbacks by state and local governments that are ever less interested in providing public goods for the future. And this includes sharp cuts in spending on water supply.

So are we just talking about the effects of ideology? Didn't Flint find itself in the cross hairs of austerity because it's a poor, mostly African-American city? Yes, that's definitely part of what happened — it would be hard to imagine something similar happening to Grosse Pointe.

But these really aren't separate stories. What we see in Flint is an all too typically American situation of (literally) poisonous interaction between ideology and race, in which small-government extremists are empowered by the sense of too many voters that good government is simply a giveaway to Those People.

Now what? Snyder has finally expressed some contrition, although he's still withholding much of the information we need to fully understand what happened. And meanwhile we are, inevitably, being told that we shouldn't make the poisoning of Flint a partisan issue.

But you can't understand what happened in Flint, and what will happen in many other places if current trends continue, without understanding the ideology that made the disaster possible.

What we see is extreme penny pinching on public goods.