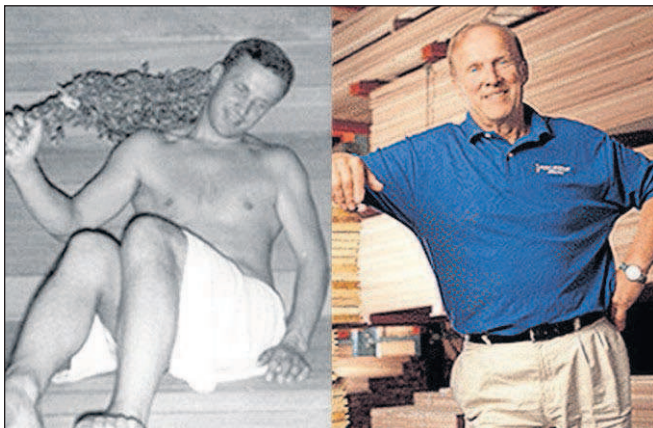


**SUCCESS STORY: ALL STEAMED UP**



**Reino and Marilyn Tarkiainen of Finlandia Sauna Products Inc.** (www.finlandiasauna.com) of Portland, were recently awarded the **Gold Medal of Merit** from the **Finland Chamber of Commerce** “in recognition of 50 years of services rendered to Finnish commerce and industry.” Pertti Harvia, president of the Muurame, Finland based-sauna manufacturer Harvia Oy, commented that this award is very seldom given to individuals outside of Finland.

And guess where Reino got his start? “I emigrated to Astoria from Finland when I was 15 and didn’t know a word of English,” he told the Ear. “I started high school at Knappa-Svensen as a freshman and graduated four years later.” He is pictured in 1965 and now.

Reino got the idea to sell Finnish saunas when he saw a company advertising a Swedish basement dryer as a sauna heater at a home show in Portland. “That really made me hot!” he said. And inspired, apparently. The couple spent their honeymoon “searching for a proper sauna heater to sell.”

The couple started Finlandia in 1964 — running it out of their home and installing sauna rooms throughout the Portland area — growing the business while both kept outside full-time jobs. Eventually their sauna business went regional, then in 1987, national, when they built an office-warehouse complex. In 1994, the Finlandia Business Park expanded to a four-building complex, and now even their children are involved — both Tanja and Terri became full-time employees after college.

Pleased as he is with the Gold Medal of Merit, Reino has a challenge ahead. He calls himself a “fierce advocate” for the Finnish Sauna, which he says is being upstaged by Chinese infrared rooms. “I will not compromise my Finnish heritage by selling infrareds,” he declared, getting steamed up again. “The tradition of sauna in Finland is over 2,000 years old and cannot be duplicated or replaced ... Finlandia will continue the fight to preserve the sauna name and tradition in the U.S.” The Ear bets he’ll win, too.

**In One Ear**



by **Elleda Wilson**

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**‘YOU HAVE TO HAVE A VISION’**



Maritime history fans should note the ocean liner **SS United States**, queen of speedy luxury Atlantic crossings in the 1950s, might be getting ready for a comeback, according to a story on Forbes.com (http://tinyurl.com/linerssus). The ship is pictured, in her heyday, courtesy of the **SS United States Conservancy** (www.ssusc.org).

Launched in 1951, the United States hasn’t sailed commercially since 1969, and since 2011 has been quietly decaying at a dock in Philadelphia. The vessel is currently owned by the SS United States Conservancy, whose executive director is **Susan Gibbs**, granddaughter of the ship’s designer, **William Francis Gibbs**. Unfortunately, the conservancy can no longer afford to care for the liner, which costs about \$60,000 a month. Out of hope and money, last October the conservancy announced they were considering recycling her.

That’s when **Edie Rodriguez**, president and chief executive officer of Crystal Cruises (part of Genting Hong Kong), came charging in on her white horse. When she saw the announcement early one Sunday morning, she sent Gibbs an email inquiry about saving the ship. Gibbs called back within minutes, probably pinching herself.

Next, Rodriguez contacted Genting’s chairman, to sell him on the idea. “As a proud American of an American-based cruise line, I felt like I would be remiss if we didn’t pursue it,” she told Forbes.com. He agreed, especially since Norwegian Cruises (also owned by Genting) actually owned the United States at one time. Five days later, the deal was done.

What happens next? A technical feasibility study on the ship. Environmental issues are a worry, Rodriguez says, but it helps that all of the asbestos has already been removed. If all goes well, where and how the ship will be restored and renovated will be decided.

So, there’s hope at last for the SS United States, all because of Edie Rodriguez. “You have to have a vision,” she told journalists. And she does.

**HICCUPS**

A tidbit from **George Flavel’s Facebook Page** (www.facebook.com/george.flavel; he is pictured): “**February 3, 1933** — **Henry Rebe**, local confectioner, who became seriously ill from an attack of hic-coughs which continued at a rate of about 60 per minute for almost eight days, was reported to be much improved today. According to his physician, **Dr. Arthur Van Dusen**, he has not coughed for about 48 hours and there are no signs of the return of the attack. News of the attack brought a big bundle of letters and telegrams containing advice as to how the fit of hic-coughing could be stopped. Dr. Van Dusen’s favorite involved a raw potato balanced on the patient’s stomach for several hours.”



**CELEBRATE THE YEAR OF THE MONKEY**



Recently had the opportunity to host visitors from Liu Xing (Rising Star), a community group supporting the **Mandarin Immersion program** at Naselle Elementary School, **Debbie Twombly**, host of KMUN’s weekly kids’ show, “Skinnamarink,” told the Ear.

“This program has been going on for three years and students are being taught all subjects in Mandarin Chinese,” she explained. “Currently the classes are offered to students in kindergarten through Grade 3, but the program is soon expanding to include students through Grade 5.

Teachers **Tan Laoshi**, also known as Jin or Jean, and **Zhu Shunmei**, aka Scott (pictured left), were joined by parent advocate **Allen Lebovitz** and his daughter, **Alia**, who is a third grade student in the program (pictured right).” They talked about the Mandarin program, and the customs surrounding Chinese New Year.

By the way, the school is hosting a community Chinese New Year celebration at 4 p.m. Saturday at the Rosburg School (Grays River Valley Center, Johnson Park), including traditional dancers, food and fun for the whole family.

“Jin enjoyed (being on the show) so much that she will be joining me on future Bedtime Stories,” Debbie added. “Be listening on school nights at 8 p.m. ... Get your pajamas on!”

**WHISTLE BLOWER**

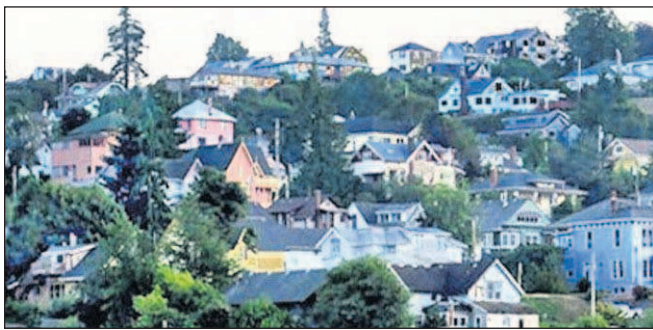


First ran Aug. 5, 2011: **Joy Brewer** wondered why she was hearing what seemed to be the nostalgic sound of a **steam whistle** every day at 5 p.m. **Tammy von Payens** sent in the answer, which she got from local artist **Roger McKay**, who is pictured.

“It is an actual steam whistle attached to the roof of **Fort George Brewery**,” Tammy wrote. “At 5 p.m., they close down the brewing production, letting off the built up steam. They put a whistle up there to catch this steam. It also showers the parking lot with its mist.”

And how does Roger know? **Chris Nermowill**, one of the brewery owners, is his son-in-law, that’s how.

**NOT EXACTLY NEWS**



SmartAsset, a New York financial technology company, has “recently released its second annual study on the **Best Places to Retire**,” a recent press release the Ear received declared. “The study rates cities by their tax friendliness, recreational and social opportunities for seniors, and availability of medical care. **Astoria** ranked **No. 8** in Oregon this year, up from their rank of No. 9 in last year’s study.”

Well ain’t that grand. The weird thing is that the No. 1 place to retire in Oregon is Hood River, but only 12.1 percent of their population is seniors, compared to Astoria, which has an 18 percent senior population. On the “Best Place to Retire Index,” Astoria scores a healthy 90.73 — but then the lowest score is 89.20 (Bend). Strangely enough, there’s no mention of any other North Coast towns on this list.

Oh well. The Ear suspects that all in all, SmartAsset doesn’t realize its study isn’t exactly news to anyone who actually lives in Astoria.

**EIGHT EMPTY ARMS**



It seems Valentine’s Day passed without the **octopus**, named **Kong**, feeling any love in the air or water at the **Seattle Aquarium** KOMO reports (http://tinyurl.com/lonelykong). Believe it or not, the aquarium invites people to come and watch the eight-legged critters mate every Valentine’s Day, but this year it was not meant to be. He is pictured, courtesy of the Seattle Aquarium.

Kong, at 70 pounds, is too big for the available females, who were in the 30 to 40 pound range. It seems there was too much of a risk, with the female being so much smaller, that he would be more interested in having her for dinner — literally — than for a passionate interlude.

Since cannibalism isn’t exactly in the spirit of the Hall-mark holiday, the match was scotched. Which was good news for Kong, since the cephalopods only live three or four years, mate once near the end of their lives, then die. Not exactly a happy ending.

However, Kong actually wound up with a dual reprieve: Not only was he spared death by mating, he was released back into Puget Sound the next day. Happy Valentine’s Day, Kong.

**THE 420 DINER**



On my 39th birthday, I was given a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis,” Astoria author **LisaMarie Costanzo** (pictured) wrote in the introduction to her cookbook. “This was not only a wake-up call that life is short, but it caused me to re-evaluate and prioritize everything.” She was drawn to Oregon where, she says, she is “blessed with the magical trio: ocean, mountains and medical marijuana.”

Yes, it’s a medical marijuana cookbook, “**The 420 Diner: What’s on the Menu?**” Having lost her mother to lung cancer, she wasn’t interested in smoking pot to relieve her MS symptoms. “However, the ‘med-ibles’ that were readily available were not always tasty and certainly not something I would serve to company,” she wrote. And, they were high dosage.

“I wasn’t looking to get high,” she noted, “I wanted a mellow feeling that would lessen the pain and help me sleep ... I needed to roll up my sleeves and get out my own trusty cooking utensils and pans ... I wanted to make magical goodies that would be desirable to me but also to the frou-frou masses, something beyond the typical brownies or Scooby Snacks.”

LisaMarie was in the catering business, and knows her way around a kitchen, so she came up with enough recipes to fill four “420 Diner” cookbooks. All of them are available at Amazon.com (http://tinyurl.com/420Diner).

“Food should be about comfort of the mind, body, and spirit,” she said. “Ingesting a food that is delicious, familiar, and adequately medicated can allow the bad feelings to be quelled and life to be lived more blissfully.”

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