

FROM HOT LEAD TO HOT LINKS 20 YEARS IN THE MAKING



The Daily Astorian news crew in 1996 at Ira's restaurant in downtown Astoria (now Drina Daisy): Seated left to right are reporter Zaz Hollander, Managing Editor Laura Sellers, reporter Marc Powell, Editor Steve Forrester, photographer Andy Dolan (front), deputy managing editor Ken O'Toole and photographer Karl Maasdam. Standing are reporters Linda Latham and Andrea Kennet, editorial assistant Sue Cody, reporter Michael Fisher and Coast Weekend Editor Brian McNeill. Not pictured are reporter Cathy Peterson, sports editor Allen Messick and sports writer Paul Danzer.

Daily Astorian debuted online on July 30, 1996

By LAURA SELLERS
The Daily Astorian

On Saturday, the Astorians website, www.dailyastorian.com, turns 20.

In 1996, we never imagined winding up in today's technological vortex. Back then, this thing dubbed the internet was just a hobby more than joined at the hip.

On Tuesday, July 30, 1996, we were mastering our "Macarena" arms, eagerly awaiting "Independence Day" in the theaters, watching summer reruns of "ER" and "Seinfeld" and being spellbound by "The Runaway Jury" by John Grisham. The top headline on the next newspaper edition was "Warrenton tackles tide gate plight." Sound familiar?

And, The Daily Astorian's website launched. Two days later, there was a tiny blurb at the bottom of the Business page announcing we were "on line" and touting the convenience of submitting a letter to the editor, subscribing or simply giving feedback. We promised

stories, down the road, from the front page, meeting agendas, fair results and visitor guide information. Our audience was probably in the teens. Ta-da!

On Aug. 16 of that year, Editor Steve Forrester Editor's Notebook was headlined, "My grandfather would not recognize our industry, but he would recognize the news." He notes that 88 years after the late E.B. Aldrich became a newspaper owner, the company faced new competitors, such as TV, radio and alternative publications, and we now offered more diverse products. He declared, "The Internet beckons us." In fact, The Daily Astorian was the first of our company's of the publications to have a web page.

He concluded with "We are dedicated to the production of quality products. That is where you have to be in the crowded information economy of 1996 and beyond."

Yep. Spot on. The 1996 Progress special section showcasing area businesses (2016's edition, Who's Who, is inserted in today's Daily Astorian) notes that 123 years after this newspaper launched, we were delivering news via the internet. "From hot lead to hotlinks in cyberspace, we continue to give the information you need ... when and where you need it. Information at your fingertips."

That's still what we strive to do. By December that year, according to the Wayback Machine, which archives news websites, our site boasted a couple of shortened stories or photos a day and links to past articles, full editorials, sports news, a pretty robust calendar of events for that era, the Mouth of the Columbia review,

In 2006, we launched the company's first "community journalism" website, Seaside-Sun.com. It unplugged two years ago.

a garden column, contact information and links to every Business Directory ad.

Even I, who involved in this launch and development, was surprised to rediscover how far we came in 4.5 months.

And it's only sped up since then.

Along the way, we've gone from homegrown html pages to three vendors that progressively offered more way to distribute news, information, videos, slideshows, advertising and so much more.

We've launched community sites and purchased and sold newspapers. We built platforms to help our communities buy and sell items, get a job or offer a service.

We've marketed ourselves in all mediums and venues with our first marketing video in the mid-2000s.

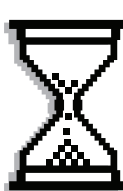
The Astorian had one of the first nationally recognized "community journalism" sites with seaside-sun.com from 2006 to 2014, which encouraged locals and community fans to contribute to build a robust face of Seaside.

Our coastal offerings now include Coast Weekend, Coast River Business Journal, Seaside Signal, Cannon Beach Gazette, Our Coast magazine, Coast Marketplace and Chinook Observer, in print and digital.

Our combined North Coast audience in June was more than a quarter million and our page views were almost half a million, and more than half of that traffic is on a mobile device.

Not too shabby.

Our company's director of digital services, Crindalyn Lyster, said, "In today's online world, it's not head-line worthy when a website



launches. That wasn't the case 20 years ago when The Daily Astorian took a leap into the digital realm. To be this forward thinking and land itself in the company of major news organizations, such as *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *LA Times*, just starting down the same path is huge.

"What was once a side project, is now front and center of what The Daily Astorian and our company does today," Lyster said. "After two decades under our belt, and a constantly evolving landscape, we hope to continue to pave the path of innovation and provide valuable digital products and solutions for our communities."

And then ...

What about tomorrow?

While our print products drive revenue and still solid, steady readership, we recognize that

DailyAstorian.com in 2006.



TOP 10 STORIES FROM 1996

1996 ended much as it began, with the weather holding all the cards. In between the deluge of rain and high winds, Clatsop County came to grips with an act of terrorism in downtown Astoria, new landlords for much of the area's timberland, a recall election for a city councilor accused of breaking the public's trust, the continuing saga of the Astoria Aquatics Center, the accidental death of a Warrenton Police reservist, closing of area hatcheries, new measures to curb downtown crime, budget fears due to Measure 47 and the departure of personnel at the National Weather Service office.

1. Facing the floods: The February floods hit parts of Clatsop County with a vengeance, destroying homes, killing livestock and causing landslides.

2. Bombs shatter calm: Astorian Michael Ernest McClain, 42, set off explosives at The Dutch Cup restaurant (now Stephanie's Cabin) and the Pig 'n Pancake before fatally shooting himself in front of stunned servers and customers at the Pig 'n Pancake. The bombs did not fully explode and there were six minor injuries. No motive was uncovered.

3. New landlords: Willamette Industries purchased a third of Clatsop County when they bought out Cavenham Forest Industries.

4. Councilor faces recall: Astoria City Councilor Jim Wilkins was arrested on drug

charges but later entered a plea that had the charges dismissed. A group said that was not enough and pushed a recall. He was later recalled

5. In the swim: The Astoria Aquatics Center broke ground in December.

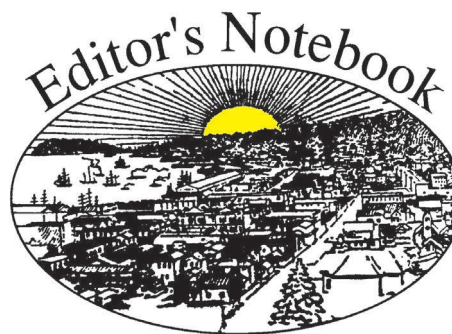
6. Officer down: In March, Warrenton Police reserve trainee Robert Bernard "Bernie" McMaster, 25, died when the patrol car he was a passenger in flipped upside down into the Skipanon Slough.

7. Hatcheries' swan song: The Gnat Creek, Klaskanine and Grays River, Wash., hatcheries started running on skeleton crews.

8. Downtown crime: Astoria merchants rebelled against a dangerous image and pressured the city council to clean out drug traffickers and wandering youths downtown. In response, a community policing program was created and three taverns were closed.

9. Measure 47 looms: Measure 47, sometimes called the "cut and cap" law, reduced property taxes to the lesser of the 1994-95 tax or the 1995-96 tax minus 10 percent and limited future increases in assessed property values, except for new construction or additions, to 3 percent per year, according to Wikipedia.

10. Bye, bye weather guys: Forecasters at the Warrenton Field Office of the National Weather Service were replaced by computers because of budget cuts.



MORE ONLINE

National and local website timelines and an early Astorian marketing video at DailyAstorian.com or <http://goo.gl/tNo501>

digital is inexorably the future.

We now post first to our website and social media, and we break news even faster: posting information as it comes in for major events.

We offer e-editions so subscribers can see the print product online and are expanding our archives as far back as we are able.

We have grown from a digital staff of one to five, who explore new and better ways to disseminate local, state, national and world news, ads and information you need to live your lives.

We have a robust commenting system that is sometimes a bit of a problem child when conversations veer from civility, but still offers a fairly free-wheeling forum.

And yes, you can still submit letters to the editor, subscribe, give us feedback, but you can also see what is happening in the Columbia-Pacific region on any given day, watch videos, see scads of photos from sporting events and more, explore topics in-depth, advertise in a variety of attention-catching formats, get an apartment or a job, find a local business or just discover more about our special region.

I'm proud to have been there for our humble beginnings, and am grateful to Forrester and then Corporate General Manager Pat Patterson, who gave us free rein to take on this hobby turned vocation. I'm grateful I have a techie husband, co-worker Carl Earl, who helped us master basic html and figure out the then unknown shoals of URLs, licensing and online forms. All along the way, there were so many who offered innovative ideas or jumped in to try new things to push the bar. Now, grab your Kindle and reread some Grisham, after you select your Pandora station. Later, I suggest you download "Independence Day: Resurgence" from Netflix or iTunes.

Laura Sellers was *The Daily Astorian's* managing editor from 1995-1999 and again since 2014. In between, she was in charge of digital for EO Media Group, the Astorian's parent company. She stands ready to rock the next thing.



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

STEPHEN A. FORRESTER, Editor & Publisher • LAURA SELLERS, Managing Editor
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