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Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke
From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

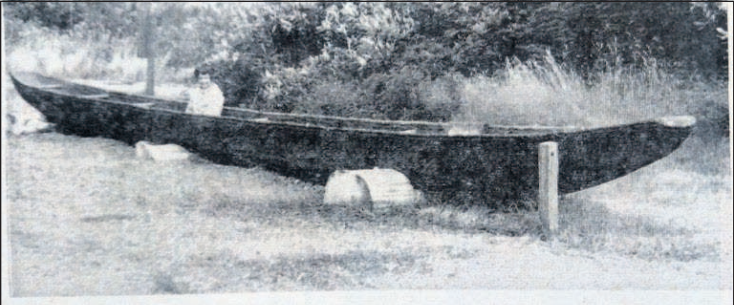
10 years ago this week — 2006

A lot of people ride their bicycles along Astoria’s popular Riverwalk. Most are riding just for the fun of it, or because they enjoy the exercise. But a few bicyclists are there to make sure everyone else has a good time. They are police assistants. The police assistants are for the most part teenagers who volunteer their time to answer visitors’ questions and provide extra sets of eyes and cars for Astoria police officers along the riverfront, downtown and in city parks. They carry police radios, but they have no law enforcement authority.

People angry about the dangerous Safeway intersection at 33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive packed Astoria City Hall Monday.
Don Webb, an outspoken proponent of a long-promised traffic light at the intersection, presented a stack of petitions to the City Council, demanding its speedy installation. He said 1,031 people had signed it — not only residents of the east side neighborhood, but people from all over Astoria and even Pacific County, Wash., residents who shop at Safeway.

Restoration of Astoria’s Doughboy Monument was a heartening event. A grassroots effort gathered the money to refurbish the statue of a World War I soldier and one of the two restrooms at the base of the monument. All of this was commemorated at a recent ceremony. While virtually every town in England has a monument to the dead of World War I, relatively fewer American small towns have such a monument as splendid as Astoria’s. The Doughboy’s existence in Astoria is a testament to the horror of that war and the mourning that ensued. It was known as “the war to end all wars.” But 10 years after the Doughboy’s 1926 dedication, the run-up to World War II was under way.

50 years ago — 1966



First people to cross the Columbia estuary near Astoria. Hollowed from cedar logs, these seaworthy craft were predecessors of the ferries and of the fine bridge which now spans the turbulent river.

The first accident on the Astoria Bridge occurred Sunday afternoon, during a day that saw 3,989 cross the bridge, causing many delays and much congestion.
Traffic congestion on the bridge was so great Sunday that state police were called out to help control it.

The State Department said today that Soviet fishery experts have agreed to limit Russian fishing within 12 miles of the Washington-Oregon coast. The Russians also agreed that “special instructions would be issued to the Soviet fleet in this area reiterating earlier instructions not to fish for salmon.”

Oregon Highway department counted 2,317 vehicles over the Astoria Bridge Monday and 2,467 Tuesday, bringing the five-day total since its opening to 15,733 vehicles, and average of more the 3,100 daily.
Tuesday saw the first vehicle breakdown on the bridge when a motorist’s car stalled in mid-bridge. Highway department officials rushed out with a can of gasoline, but it developed the car had battery trouble and was given help in starting the engine.

Sale of the John Jacob Astor hotel by the Osburn interests to a corporation headed by professional motel and hotel operators was in process today, perhaps to be consummated before nightfall.

75 years ago — 1941

Parachute troops poured out of 30 or more “red” enemy transport planes on both sides of the Columbia River mouth at daybreak today and this afternoon were closely besieging harbor defenses of the Columbia, in an opening phase of war maneuvers which ultimately will involve 100,000 troops in the northwest.
Trucks, jeeps and other military vehicles whizzed on Clatsop Plains, steel-helmeted soldiers guarded bridges and road junctions in the territory surrounding Fort Stevens as the red invaders pressed their attack seeking to control the mouth of the Columbia River.

Theoretically the invaders, who also seized the Clatsop airport, had commandeered cars from passersby and 900 of them were attacking Fort Stevens.
Theoretically another force had landed in the same way on the north shore of the Columbia River and was attacking Forts Canby and Columbia.
“The attack has been checked and a main line of resistance established on the outskirts of Fort Stevens,” said a communication from harbor defense headquarters this afternoon.
Another 900 parachutists who landed at North head were theoretically surrounded and all troops at Fort Stevens were to be thrown into the battle to destroy the enemy force on the Oregon shore and send support to Fort Canby.



The world loves refugees, when they’re Olympians

By ROGER COHEN
New York Times News Service

The world is moved by Team Refugees at the Olympics in Rio. They are greeted with a standing ovation at the opening ceremony. Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations secretary-general, not a man given to extravagant displays of emotion, is all smiles. President Barack Obama tweets support for these 10 athletes who “prove that you can succeed no matter where you’re from.” Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, posts a video on Facebook in which she speaks of the world’s 65 million displaced people — the largest number since World War II — and says they “are dreaming bigger because you’re doing what you’re doing.”

Who could fail to be moved? These are brave people. They have fled anguish in search not of a better life, but of life itself. In general, you do not choose to become a refugee because you have a choice, but because you have no choice. Like Yusra Mardini, the 18-year-old Syrian refugee from a Damascus suburb, who left a country that now exists only in name, and reached Germany only after the small boat bringing her from Turkey to Greece started taking on water in heavy seas. She and her sister Sarah dived into the water and for more than three hours pushed until it reached the island of Lesbos.

In Rio, Mardini won her heat of the 100-meter butterfly, but did not advance due to her inferior time. Still, hers is a remarkable achievement. Yes, the world is moved by Team Refugees. Yet, it is unmoved by refugees.

They die at sea. They die sealed in the back of a truck. They die anonymous deaths. Fences are erected, walls mooted. Posters decry them. They represent danger and threaten disruption. They are freeloaders. They are left in festering limbo on remote Pacific islands. There is talk of a threat to “European civilization” — read Christian Europe. There is talk of making the United States great again — read making the United States white again. Rightist political parties thrive by scapegoating them. Nobody wants refugees. They could be terrorists or rapists. They sit in reception centers. The U.S. pledged to take in at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the current fiscal year. In the previous four years, it had admitted about 1,900. This is a pittance. About 4.8 million Syrians have fled their country since the war began.

One Western country, Germany, has shown political courage commensurate with the challenge and thrown open its doors. Having plumb the depths of depravity, it knows a moral imperative when it sees one.



Richard Heathcote/Pool Photo via AP
Rose Nathike Lokonyen carries the flag of Refugee Olympic Team during the opening ceremony for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Friday.



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong
Refugee Olympic Team's Yusra Mardini, center, smiles during a welcome ceremony held at the Olympic village ahead of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Aug. 3

The world loves Team Refugees — the two swimmers from Syria, the two judokas originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the marathoner from Ethiopia, the five runners from South Sudan. It admires Rami Anis, a Syrian swimmer now living in Belgium. His hometown is Aleppo, cravenly abandoned by the West to bombardment by Russian forces. Russia strolled into Syria when it realized, after several years of war, that the U.S. would not lift a finger.

Yes, let’s cheer the refugee team in Rio, the first of its kind, but not with empty words, and not to assuage our Syrian consciences. They walk now under an Olympic flag. They want the flag of a homeland. Thomas Bach, the president of the International Olympic Committee, said: “We want to send a message of hope for all refugees in our world.” But after the fanfare, will anyone remember? The world is being pulled in two directions at once. The force of globalization, of nomadic mobility, of borderless cyberspace has engendered an equally strong counterforce of nationalism, nativist politics and anti-immigrant bigotry. The two trends are poised in a tense equilibrium.

I lived in Brazil for several years. It is a generous country. Perhaps no other nation has such a mestizo culture, such ingrained habits of mingling. It feels right that this outreach to Team Refugees should have happened in Rio, a city of miscegenation and openness. The glorification of Team Refugees and the vilification of refugees coexist. How can they? It’s the old principle: Not in my backyard. “We are getting better and we are getting worse at the same time,” Paul Auster, the novelist, told me. “And at the same speed.” I am reminded of the words of my friend Fritz Stern, the distinguished historian who died this year. “I was born into a world on the cusp of avoidable disaster.” He continued, “The fragility of freedom is the simplest and deepest lesson of my life and work.”

Freedom cannot be built on exclusion and hatred. It is a universal human right. Brazil and the International Olympic Committee have given the world a glimpse of the humanity and aspirations of each refugee. Perhaps, after all, we are getting better faster than we are getting worse, and barriers will continue to fall — but not through words alone.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ferry memories

The Astoria ferry boat brings back some fond memories of yesteryear. In 1930 and 1940, my parents would put my brother Don and I on a ferry boat in Portland and send us to Astoria during the summer (no adult chaperone). In Astoria, Aunt Wilma, Uncle Lee and Cousin Carol Gregory would meet us, and we would stay with them at their church, which is now a bed and breakfast next to the Masonic Temple. At least two times each year (or

was it once?), we were each given 10 cents and told to walk down to the ferry landing and get on board and ride over to the Washington side two times, and then get off and walk back home. Seems amazing that children were allowed to get around like that, but we even walked down to the cannery where my aunt filleted fish, and she would give us an eyeball to play with. I guess we must have been a handful, because we were eventually sent out to the Schulback farm, where my grandma was busy raising a family

whose mother had passed away. We wound up helping peel chittern bark and milking cows. Mr. Schulback took us to the steam baths in Uniontown, and that was a culture shock for a couple of kids, since nobody wore clothes. I can imagine how Joe, August and Adolph felt about babysitting two kids, age 6 and 7, but we were put on a bus and sent back to Reedville, and later on to Vanport.

BOB COOK
Seaside