

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

Myers leaves long legacy of statesmanship

Hardy Myers was a gentleman. That is a too-rare quality in today's political climate, but it was more of the norm during Myers' long tenure as a legislator, speaker of the Oregon House and attorney general. Myers, who died Tuesday at 77, will be remembered as one of the last of his breed, as well as a statesman in his own right.

For generations, "The Oregon Way" — innovation and collaboration despite partisan differences — governed state politics.

Remnants of that time, when the common good often trumped party affiliation and political ego, still remain. For example, Oregon candidates rarely indicate their party affiliation on their lawn signs and in their fliers, whereas in neighboring Washington state, political party is featured prominently in campaign materials. And in contrast with other states, Oregon officials don't plaster their names all over "Welcome to Oregon" signs; they usually drive their own cars instead of being chauffeured; and they commonly are on a first-name basis with constituents, as was "Hardy."

In that spirit of commonality a decade ago, Democratic state Senate President Peter Courtney and Republican House Speaker Karen Minnis worked together to improve the antiquated conditions at the Oregon State Hospital, where "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" was filmed, and to lay the groundwork for new psychiatric hospitals in Salem and Junction City.

It's no surprise that Courtney reacted to word of Myers' death by saying that the news broke his heart: "He taught me everything. ... He taught me to respect other people and other viewpoints. ... He was a genuinely nice human being."

Myers was raised in central Oregon, and following his conscience was more important than his ideology as a Democrat. As a state representative, he succeeded — for a short time — in blocking reinstatement of the Oregon death penalty. His conscience stood up to intense political pressure inside and outside the Capitol.

Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith would later take a similar stand of conscience at the federal level, refusing to support physician-assisted suicide even though Oregon voters twice approved the process. Myers was on the other side, fighting to uphold the Oregon law.

In the days since Myers' death, he has been lauded for his national work on school safety after the Thurston High School shooting in 1998, his legal fight against tobacco companies and his tenacity in strengthening Oregon laws against domestic and sexual violence.

But above all, Hardy Myers should be remembered as a true Oregonian.

A man who kept his word.

A statesman.

A gentleman.

Columbia Senior Dinners needs community's help

Columbia Senior Dinners, a nonprofit that serves meals at the Astoria Senior Center and delivers them to homebound residents, is in jeopardy of closing next year, and the community must not let that happen.

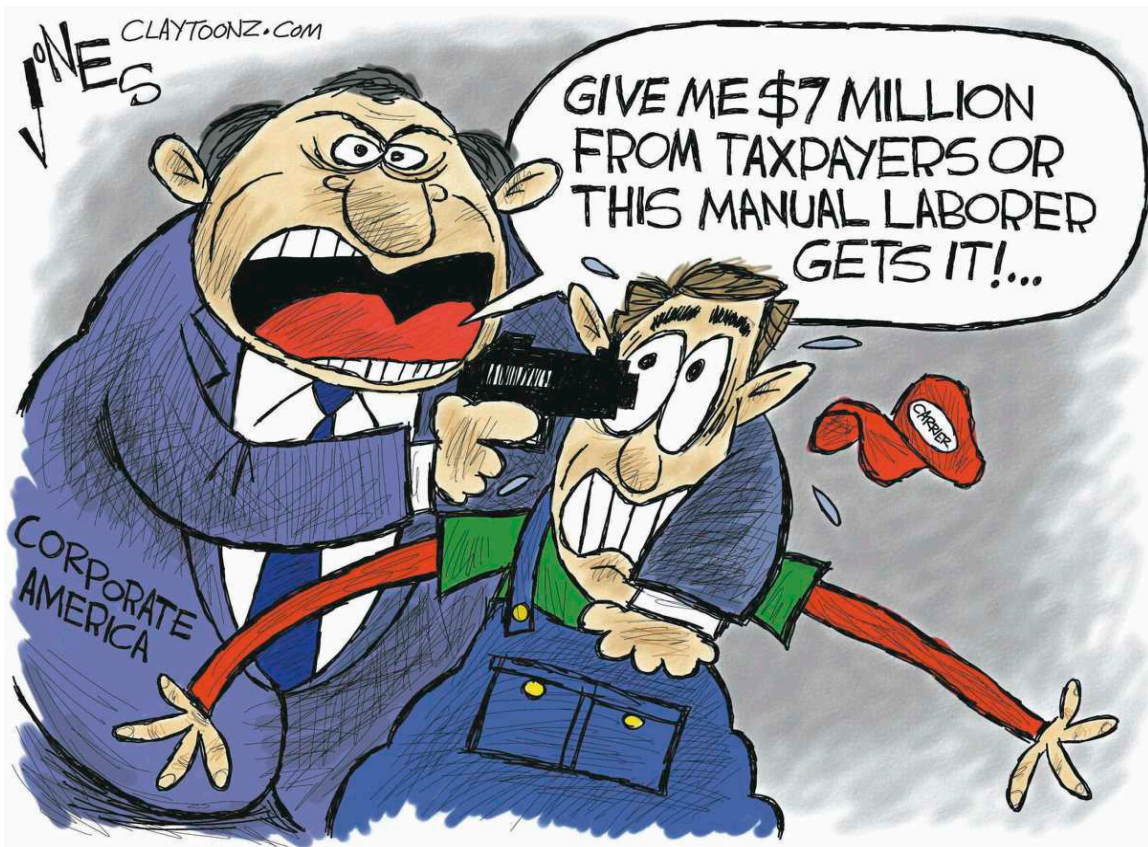
The organization has a long history dating to its origin as Loaves & Fishes 43 years ago, and is operating on financial reserves to offset a severe budget shortfall.

The program is all volunteer except for a salaried chef. It provides more than 550 meals on site and delivers more than 250 meals within city limits each month, functioning as a local Meals on Wheels. For homebound clients the program's drivers may be the only contact they have that day, and it also serves as a check-in service.

The program operates out of the senior center, where it leases the kitchen. The senior center received a federal grant for the building's recent remodeling with a stipulation that it must provide at least one meal a day, five days a week, to seniors. If Columbia Senior Dinners goes under, the senior center would have to fill the gap.

Columbia Senior Dinners board treasurer Steve Mills says the program relies on an annual \$4,000 grant from the city, a \$6-per-meal charge and private donations. Mills estimates the organization's reserves will only last about eight months before it would have to close. Meanwhile, the program is seeking additional grant funding and donations while it works to reduce expenses and achieve sustainability.

We hope all of those things happen because the program provides an invaluable service and needs the community's collective help.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Heroes wanted: Daring to 'go there' with tsunami safety

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

Two guys can move mountains. Well, at least they can move schools and build bridges.

Catching the wave for Seaside City Council was Tom Horning. Horning, the unlikely hero of Bonnie Henderson's nonfiction book "The Next Tsunami," didn't even expect to win.

He was a one-issue candidate who during the campaign frankly admitted he didn't care much about the day-to-day business of city governance. He dared to "go there" when it came to the issue of tsunami preparedness.

What he did want to see was tsunami preparedness. The new school location was just the start for Horning, and probably not the best way to save the most lives in a catastrophe. He wants to see the city's tsunami-vulnerable bridges replaced.

"Tsunami preparation should touch every issue," Horning said. "The city likes to not rock the boat too much. They like to appear in control. That's reassuring to the tourist and business community. To say the town has problems is upsetting to some business people. We don't stand out as the worst-case scenario, even though we are, but there's every reason to do something about it. Simply hike up your pants and get to work."

Like Horning, Seaside School District Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty is a hero of Henderson's book.

Dougherty took a lot of heat in 2013. Cannon Beach residents were not pleased with the decision to close the elementary school due to its \$1.15 million budget shortfall and high per pupil cost. "Shocked and angry," was how the Cannon Beach Gazette characterized reaction. "It's not just a building, but a community's heart," said one mom.

At that time, the tsunami was almost an afterthought. When the new campus plan was unveiled, voters didn't like the \$128.8 million price tag on the bond vote, which stumbled at the polls and left the district with no "Plan B."

"I think we need to go back to the drawing board," Mike Morgan, the Cannon Beach mayor at the time, said after the result.

Personal time

When Dougherty stepped down earlier this year as district superintendent, he dedicated much of his own personal time to ensure the passing of the bond vote.

It looked iffy and passage was by no means certain. Even at a reduced price the bond was a tough sell to voters; in Seaside, 4 out of 10 homes are vacant, and in Cannon Beach, 6 out of 10 are seasonal or vacation properties, putting the tax burden on people who don't even live here full time. Residents couldn't let go of the idea of "gold-plated doorknobs" and property owners are never ready for tax hikes.

Dougherty spearheaded "Vote Yes for Our Local Schools" and teamed bond supporters from throughout the community. He lobbied in Salem and brought U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden to Seaside to see the threat firsthand. He brought national attention to the issue in Kathryn Schulz's Pulitzer Prize-winning New Yorker article, "The Really Big One."



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Seaside School District Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty points out a student evacuation route to U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden as Tom Horning looks on during a visit to Seaside earlier this year.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Supporters of the district's bond rallied in Seaside in early November.

This year saw a donation of an 80-acre campus land gift and the prospect of \$4 million in state funds to move the schools. Bond rates were low, adding cost savings. But voters weren't supporting this because of favorable accounting data. Dougherty's cheerleading led the community to take action.

The marches and the rallies, the lobbying — led by student leaders and representatives throughout the state and in Salem — all had its result in the polls. In a 65 percent to 35 percent vote, residents endorsed the plan to replace deteriorating schools by moving to the city's East Hills adjacent to Seaside Heights Elementary School.

The decision to build a new school campus on the hillside "is a hugely important step not just for Seaside but for families from Arch Cape to Gearhart," Henderson said immediately after the election.

Work to do

With the bond's passage, there is work to be done, and quickly.

The district is required to expend 85 percent of the bonds within three years to avoid paying taxes on the funds. At the new school site, engineers will have to work with 80 acres of hillside to construct a quake-resistant campus for a 21st-century education, resiliency and a safe gathering spot in the event of a catastrophe.

Plans were on hold as architects waited for the result of the bond. Submitted drawings, so far, are general and limited to a campus site plan.

The school district needs to ask Seaside to bring the land into the city's urban growth boundary. Transportation studies must

be devised to get Cannon Beach, Seaside and Gearhart kids to the new location — and there isn't even a project manager yet.

Students still have four or five years in their current schools — their day-to-day plans and infrastructure needs must be met.

If the Cannon Beach Academy opens next year as planned for kindergartners through second-graders, what is their tsunami safety strategy? Children will not necessarily be safer in a Cascadia event at the temporary location on Sunset Avenue than they would have been at the elementary school.

And as enrollment increases and grade levels are added, where can the academy safely relocate for the long term?

Protecting residents

Dougherty and Horning approached this election from vastly different places, but in the end their platforms had a similar goal: to protect our residents to the risks of a catastrophic quake and tsunami.

Luckily they're not alone. In November's vote, the entire community shared its own awareness of a risk larger than our community, our state and our region. Continued scrutiny and delivery by both critics and supporters of this ambitious project will ensure the safety of students during the school year, and serve as a model for future efforts to reach out to residents and visitors alike. Dougherty and Horning are the first wave. Time for the rest of us to step up.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.