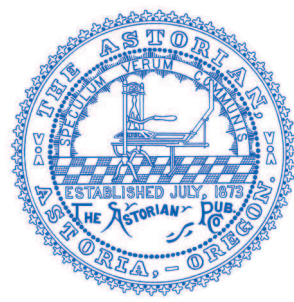


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW



Cliff Mass/University of Washington

Construction of a Doppler radar station on Langley Hill in Grays Harbor County, Washington, has meant a major improvement in weather forecasting on the Washington and north Oregon coasts since it went into operation in September 2011. It cost about \$9 million. A similar facility is needed for the next stretch of coastline to the south.

Doppler radar needed for coastal storm warnings

Rambunctious autumn storms this year highlight the need for more atmospheric data and better forecasting on the Oregon Coast. Since many of our worst storms come out of the southwest, Doppler weather radar for the central coast would also benefit many communities farther north.

The mid-October tornado in Manzanita was a warning siren on behalf of closing a dangerous gap in the nation's coastal Doppler system. KGW reported at the time that it is the only stretch of coast in the lower 48 states not covered by the storm-detecting technology.

The only radar to detect the tornado before it hit — giving a couple minutes warning — is located on Langley Hill in Grays Harbor County, Washington. Obtaining that facility was a long-term project by U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., who recognized that Doppler stations located along the Interstate 5 corridor are blocked by the Coast Range, Willapa Hills and Olympic Mountains from seeing much of the weather coming off the Pacific.

Even when the radar located along I-5 does manage to peer down the Columbia channel to the sea, it lacks the resolution to spot some of the tightly packed weather systems that pound our communities and fishing boats senseless.

"Here at the coast where the weather is probably the most volatile ... to not have (radar) is a little concerning," a Manzanita resident said after the tornado. "We got lucky this time around."

The Langley Hill Doppler has made a big difference in its five years in operation, giving meteorologists the ability to track storms over 100 miles off the coast, allowing for more accurate short-term forecasting. But it doesn't entirely fix the problem.

Many will remember that weathermen were dramatically wrong in their forecast of a powerful cyclone that was supposed to ravish western Oregon and Washington a day after the tornado hit. Thankfully, in that case, lack of a Doppler radar on the central coast meant storm danger was overestimated. It would be far worse, and not unprecedented, to underestimate a storm coming from the southwest, as happened with the system of typhoons that smashed our area in December 2007.

The Northwest coast's weather is likely to become more erratic, not less so, as climate change throws unpredictable wild cards into the serious game of forecasting severe winds and flood-producing rains.

Writing for the Eugene Register-Guard after the mid-October storms, Paul Ruscher of the American Meteorological Society said, "Oregon has, arguably, the poorest weather radar coverage in the nation, when overlaid with population affected. Technologies are available to fix this problem." Besides the gap on the coast, he noted much of eastern Oregon is not covered by meteorological radar at all.

Although the nation obviously has a great many expensive needs, plugging this dangerous hole in weather knowledge would certainly save lives. Like New Orleans' inadequate dikes, this is a risk we know all about and would be foolhardy not to address.



GUEST COLUMN

Larson: A mayor who time, and Seaside won't forget

By NANCY MCCARTHY
 For The Daily Astorian

Seaside never really needed a chamber of commerce. All the city needed was Don Larson. Mayor Larson, 80, died Dec. 11 following a long battle with cancer. But even that struggle didn't dampen his enthusiasm for the town he loved.



No matter how he was feeling, no matter what personal or public issues he was dealing with, Don always greeted everyone with a broad smile and bright blue eyes that enveloped the person whose hand he was shaking.

And there was that laugh. A delighted, raspy laugh that traveled through a room packed with business operators and Seaside's movers and shakers at Friday morning breakfast gatherings. Anyone who knew Don knew that laugh.

His chuckles could be heard before City Council meetings when he joked with City Manager Mark Winstanley and personally greeted residents and fellow councilors. Then he would bang the gavel to signal that it was time to recite the salute to the American flag and begin the meeting. It was a ritual he performed as mayor for 14 years.

Don was a man of humor — he could make quick quips that eased tense discussions — and he was a man of compassion who encouraged nervous or emotional citizens, alone behind the lectern, to speak from their hearts.

Accomplishments

A volunteer on city committees since 1994, he took pride in the accomplishments that a small town like Seaside had accomplished. We all heard him boast continually about how residents and city officials pulled together to achieve the new library, the skatepark, Broadway Park remodel, the popular Fourth of July celebrations and even the city's transportation system plan, among dozens of other projects.

Although he was mayor and the city's leader, Don sought little recognition. His praise went to local students, police officers, public works officials, library staff members, the visitors bureau, Seaside Civic and Convention Center employees, the Seaside Rotary and pretty much everyone who had anything to do with making Seaside shine. But it was Don who was named Mayor of the Year by the League of Oregon Cities in 2009.

Winstanley recently called him a "marvelous mayor."

"The city of Seaside couldn't have been luckier to have him and it's certainly a great loss," Winstanley said after Don's death.

Could be critical

Despite his nearly Pollyannish attitude toward Seaside, however — or maybe because of it — Don could be critical of those who he thought should be paying more attention to promoting the city. The Daily Astorian and the Seaside Signal often received his scrutiny, especially if he thought Seaside wasn't receiving its proper share of headlines.

I remember attending a meeting where Don was presiding. Although the meeting topic had nothing to do with the Daily Astorian's local coverage, the mayor embarked on a mildly rambling tirade about the lack of attention the newspaper had been paying to Seaside lately. I had



The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Seaside Mayor Don Larson, right, along with his wife, Lois, second from right, shares a laugh with Seaside Fire Chief Joey Daniels and girlfriend Jaime Oxley, a firefighter with the Gearhart Fire Department, about Oxley's oversized "Chief Daniels" inscribed jacket during the 2013 National Night Out celebration at Broadway Park.



Nancy McCarthy/For The Daily Astorian

Mayor Don Larson crawled through a time capsule at the dedication of Broadway Park in 2009.

heard some of those views from him before, only in private.

Well, as the South County reporter for the paper, I felt called to action by his comments, even though they weren't directed specifically at me. I spent the next full day going through each paper for the previous month and writing down all Seaside-related headlines, including sports. I mailed the long list of headlines and story summaries to Don, along with a tersely worded letter pointing out that the paper wasn't meant to be the city's public relations organ, and mailed the packet to him.

The next day, as soon as his mail was delivered, he called me.

"Nancy," he said, a bit taken aback. "It sounds like you're mad at me."

He then apologized and mentioned that he had been out of town for most of the past month.

The incident was forgotten, and Don continued to be sincerely friendly.

Respect and joy

Don's respect for others — no matter their background — earned their respect for him. Angela Fairless spearheaded the skatepark development many years ago and often attended council meetings to earnestly urge Don and the council to act on sensitive issues, including homelessness, public issues and marijuana legalization. She opposed him as a mayoral candidate in the 2014 election.

"I've come to believe that you learn more about a man's character when challenging him than when you work cooperatively alongside him," Fairless posted on Facebook following Don's death. "I did both with this man, and what I learned is that his character was solid and good."

When I think of Don, I remember his joy for life.

I remember his glee at holding a giant pair of scissors while cutting the ribbon to open the new library, now to be known as the Donald E. Larson Library. I remember him laughing and grunting while he worked to unroll the artificial turf at Broadway Park, signaling the start of a long-awaited improvement project. During Fourth of July parades, he used to love climbing into "Old Mac," the Seaside Fire Department's antique fire engine, and waving to the crowds. At somber ceremonies, such as the annual Pearl Harbor commemoration, Don, a retired staff training officer for the U.S. Army Reserve, delivered comforting words to veterans.

In 2009, several local volunteers built a time capsule, a tube 24 inches around and 5 feet long, to contain students' drawings, newspapers, aerial photos and other memorabilia in honor of Oregon's 150th anniversary. The capsule was unveiled at the Broadway Park dedication.

Don was pretty happy that day. All sorts of dignitaries were there, including former Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts. It was a beautiful summer afternoon. After the ceremony, when no one was looking (except me with my camera), Don, in a playful mood, crawled inside the empty, open capsule. I have a photo of just his legs hanging out.

If we could only encapsulate the time we spent with Don, what a good thing that would be! But we still have our memories of the example he set for Seaside: Continue to love it and keep it shining.

Nancy McCarthy is the former editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette and South County reporter for the Daily Astorian.