

Nelson: Judge was born and raised in Astoria, plans to stay

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decision by the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners to deny the pipeline company's land use permit. The Oregon Court of Appeals upheld Nelson's decision, effectively ending the project.

Nelson became a district court judge in 1993 (the state of Oregon merged the separate district and circuit courts in 1998). He didn't at first realize the full weight of the responsibilities of that job, he said, but he is grateful to the public for electing him.

Good and bad

He said he will miss the complicated cases, "digging into it and trying to sort out the issues." He will miss Hovden, who has been his judicial assistant for 21 years and who has been, he said, "a great person to work with." But, he said, "I know a lot of things I'm not going to miss."

He won't miss the cases where one side has a lawyer and the other doesn't. He won't miss the lack of jail space that meant he could order someone to jail in the morning and see them walk free by lunchtime.

Being a judge is a demanding job — mentally, emotionally and physically — with long hours of sitting, listening, sifting through arguments, wondering what the results of a decision might be, becoming familiar with the many ways people deceive and damage each other.

Nearly every day, unless the rain was blowing sideways, Nelson walked up the hills of Astoria during his lunch break. It was a way to keep stress at bay.

"It didn't work," he said.

Last summer, Nelson suf-

fered a major heart attack. Though he recovered and went back to work, he decided to retire at the end of his term instead of seeking re-election. It was something he and his wife had been discussing anyway, he said.

'Tremendous respect'

"I've always thought of Judge Nelson as someone who is very thoughtful about what he's doing on the bench and who works very hard to do what's right under the confines of the law," said Astoria attorney Mary Ann Murk, who has

represented clients in Nelson's courtroom since 1999. "It's kind of odd to think of him leaving ... It's very odd."

For Hovden, Judge Nelson's courtroom represents a huge chunk of her career.

The relationship between a judge and his judicial assistant requires a high degree of trust, she said. "We always worked well together."

Holden will work with incoming judge Dawn McIntosh beginning in January.

"I have tremendous respect for him," said District Attorney Josh Marquis of Nelson.

"I don't always agree with him, but I think he's extraordinarily fair."

Chief Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown agreed, calling Nelson "one of the fairest judges" he has ever seen. He remembered an old poster of a fisherman Nelson used to have with the motto "Work is our joy" printed on it.

"I really do believe he finds joy in his work," Brown said.

Nelson was born and raised in Astoria and doesn't plan on leaving once he's retired. He plans, he says, to fish.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Putin says Russia won't expel US diplomats in hacking flap

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin castigated the United States today for imposing sanctions and expelling Russian diplomats amid allegations of Russian meddling in the American presidential election, but said no U.S. diplomats will be ousted in reprisal for President Barack Obama's moves in the wake of hacking attacks.

In a burgeoning controversy surrounding complaints from the Obama administration about a cyberattack against America's political system, the White House on Thursday unleashed a string of sanctions and coupled them with an order that 35 Russians be expelled.

Putin, however, said on Friday that Moscow would not eject American diplomats in response to what he described as "provocation aimed at further undermining Russian-American relations" less than a month before Donald Trump is to take over the White House.

The decision came as a surprise; tit-for-tat expulsions are common diplomatic practice and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had suggested hours before Putin's announcement that Russia would oust 31 American diplomats.

"The Russian diplomats returning home will spend the New Year holidays with their relatives and dear ones," Putin said in a statement published on the Kremlin website. "We will not create problems for U.S. diplomats. We will not expel anybody."

He added: "Moreover, I am inviting all children of U.S. diplomats accredited in Russia to the New Year and Christmas parties at the Kremlin."

Putin appeared to aim at playing a long game and at making a barbed reminder that Obama is a lame duck.

Did Debbie Reynolds die of broken-heart syndrome?

Dying of a broken heart is real.

When Debbie Reynolds passed away this week, her son said the stress of his sister Carrie Fisher's death the day before was too much for his mother to take.

The emotional distress of losing a loved one can trigger broken-heart syndrome, a recognized medical condition that disproportionately affects women and can be fatal.

"A 'broken heart' really is an event where the heart ceases to function normally and is prone to heart rhythm abnormalities," said Dr. Mark Creager, director of the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Heart and Vascular Center in New Hampshire and past president of the American Heart Association. "That term is used to explain a very real phenomenon that does occur in patients who have been exposed to sudden emotional stress or extremely devastating circumstances."

Known medically as stress-induced cardiomyopathy or takotsubo syndrome, it can strike anyone, even those in good health with no previous heart problems.

Reynolds, who suffered two strokes in 2015 but recovered, was taken by ambulance to a hospital the day after Fisher died.

"She said, 'I want to be with Carrie,'" Reynolds' son, Todd Fisher, told The Associated Press. "And then she was gone."

No cause of death has been disclosed for either woman.

Broken-heart syndrome is when a surge of stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, cause arteries to seize, limiting blood flow to the heart. The experience — and diagnosis — is often confused with heart attack, Creager said.

New Oregon secretary of state names ousted execs to top posts

PORTLAND — Oregon's Secretary of State-elect Dennis Richardson, who will be sworn in today, has named an ousted elections official and a former state manager tied to a multimillion-dollar scandal to top administrative positions.

The Oregonian reports Richardson has appointed Leslie Cummings as deputy secretary of state. Cummings managed tech-security for the Oregon Employment Department until 2013, when



AP Photo/Chris Pizzello

Debbie Reynolds, left, and Carrie Fisher arrive at the Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards in Los Angeles in 2011. Reynolds, star of the 1952 classic "Singin' in the Rain" died Wednesday.

she resigned after being caught up in accusations of nepotism and wasting millions in public funds.

For elections director, Richardson selected Steve Trout, who held the position from 2009 to 2013 under then-Secretary of State Kate Brown. Trout left after Brown faced criticism for giving candidates short notice that the date of their election would change — a responsibility of the elections director.

Trout said Brown, who is now governor, asked him to resign but said it had nothing to do with the election scheduling entanglement.

Syria's cease-fire holding despite minor violations, clashes

BEIRUT — A nationwide Syrian cease-fire brokered by Russia and Turkey that went into effect at midnight was holding today despite minor violations, marking a potential breakthrough in a conflict that has been shredding high-level peace initiatives for over five years.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported clashes early today between troops and rebels in the central province of Hama and near the capital, Damascus, but said there have been no reports of civilian casualties since the truce began.

Opposition activist Mazen al-Shami, who is based in the Damascus suburb of Douma, said minor clashes nearby left one rebel wounded. Activist Ahmad al-Masalmeh, in the southern Daraa province, said government forces had opened fire on rebel-held areas.

Several past attempts at halting the fighting have failed. As with previous agreements, the current cease-fire excludes both the al-Qaida-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front, which fights alongside other rebel factions, and the Islamic State group.

With clock ticking, Palestinians pin hopes on Paris summit

RAMALLAH, West Bank — After a pair of diplomatic victories, the Palestinians are now setting their sights on a Mideast peace conference in France next month in a bid to rally support as they prepare for the uncertainty of the Trump administration.

The Palestinians are hopeful that a strong international endorsement in Paris will insulate them from what they fear will be a close alliance between President-elect Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

With their hopes for gaining independence in a deep freeze, the Palestinians had a rare week of optimism. First, the U.S. allowed the U.N. Security Council to adopt Resolution 2334, which declared Israeli settlements on occupied lands illegal. Then, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a farewell speech that harshly criticized Israeli settlements, saying Israel's continued construction was imperiling hopes for a peace agreement and endangering the country's democracy.

Palestinian officials say they are now counting on the French-hosted Mideast peace conference to build on the momentum and

set clear terms of reference for any future negotiations with Israel. Some 70 nations are expected to attend, although Israel and the Palestinians will not be participating.

Benefits of Indian cash overhaul elusive as deadline passes

NEW DELHI — Fifty days ago, India yanked most of its currency from circulation without warning, jolting the economy and leaving most citizens scrambling for cash. As the deadline for exchanging the devalued 500- and 1,000-rupee notes for new ones hits today, many Indians are still stuck waiting in long bank lines.

Empty ATMs and ever-changing rules are preventing people from withdrawing money, and many small, cash-reliant businesses from cinemas to neighborhood grocery stores are suffering huge losses or going under.

Despite those problems, Prime Minister Narendra Modi says his Nov. 8 demonetization decree has succeeded in uncovering tax evasion and cracking down on graft. The Indian government is urging patience, insisting it's playing a long game that will eventually modernize Indian society and benefit the poor.

So far, despite the widespread inconvenience and costs, most of the country's 1.25 billion citizens appear to be taking Modi's word for it.

Cosby, a year later: Will he seek deal or prepare for trial?

NORRISTOWN, Pa. — Bill Cosby is starting 2017 in a legal dragnet that has only tightened around him since his stunning arrest a year ago.

Cosby was charged with aggravated sexual assault on Dec. 30, 2015, just days before the 12-year statute of limitations would have run out over a 2004 encounter at his estate near Philadelphia.

A year later, it's increasingly unlikely that he can avoid a felony trial slated for June. The judge has denied nearly each defense motion as the two sides fight over Cosby's deposition, other accusers and the decade-long delay in filing charges.

"It doesn't sound like the prosecutors are inclined to give him a deal that will matter," said Loyola Law School professor Laurie Levenson, who is not involved in the case. "It's an elderly man, and any (jail sentence) is probably, in his mind, worth fighting."

A recent tabloid news report suggested a plea could be in the works, but Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele's spokeswoman calls the report unfounded. Still, some celebrity lawyers don't rule it out.

Serena wins at love again; says 'yes' to engagement in poem

Court and spark: Serena Williams is tying the knot.

The tennis great announced her engagement to Alexis Ohanian on Thursday, posting a poem on Reddit that she accepted the proposal of the social news website's co-founder.

Williams' agent, Jill Smoller, confirmed the engagement in an email to The Associated Press.

Ohanian wrote on his Facebook page, "She said yes."

Late fee? No prob: Check covers library books 40 years later

ROCKVILLE, Md. — A library lover who found two books more than four decades overdue at a vacation cabin in Canada is making a donation to cover the late fees — at the 1970s-era rate of a nickel a day.

The Minnesota man and his family gave the Maryland library a check for about \$1,550 to cover the fees.

Jon Kramer, of Minneapolis, says he was searching through his deceased parents' library last month at their cabin on an island in Ontario when he found a camping book and a cookbook that had been checked out from a Montgomery County library in the 1970s.

Kramer remembered family library trips fondly and sent a \$1,552.30 donation. He says he's keeping the books but is willing to continue paying late fees in the future.

Was Alexa a witness to murder? Prosecutors seek Amazon Echo data

By JILL BLEED
Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Authorities investigating the death of an Arkansas man whose body was found in a hot tub want to expand the probe to include a new kind of evidence: any comments overheard by the suspect's Amazon Echo smart speaker.

Amazon said it objects to "overbroad" requests as a matter of practice, but prosecutors insist their idea is rooted in a legal precedent that's "as old as Methuselah."

The issue has emerged in the slaying of Victor Collins, who was found floating face-up last year in the hot tub at a friend's home in Bentonville, about 150 miles northwest of Little Rock. The friend, James Andrew Bates, was later

charged with murder.

Prosecutors have asked the court to force Amazon to provide data from the Echo that could reveal more clues about the night of Nov. 22, 2015, when Collins was apparently strangled and drowned.

Benton County Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Smith said Wednesday that he has no idea if the device recorded anything related to the death. But looking for clues is simply "a question of law enforcement doing their due diligence."

Like any investigation, "law enforcement has an obligation to try to obtain evidence of the crime," Smith said.

The device is a cylinder-shaped speaker with internet-connected microphones that debuted in late 2014. Similar to other gadgets, it listens for a user's voice and responds

to commands — to play music, read the morning headlines or add an upcoming event to a calendar, for instance. The Echo can speak back to the user in a female voice known as "Alexa."

Search warrant

The search warrant, signed by a judge in August, requests all "audio recordings, transcribed records, text records and other data" from Bates' Echo speaker.

So far, authorities have obtained only basic subscriber and account information. Smith said Wednesday that his office has had discussions with Amazon, but that the bulk of the request remains unfulfilled.

The prosecution's request was first reported this week by The Information, a news site that covers the technology industry.



Public Meeting Columbia River System Operations

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration invite the public to help identify issues that the agencies will analyze in the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement. The agencies will use this EIS to assess the effects and update their approach to operations of 14 federal dams and related facilities in the interior Columbia River basin.

The agencies welcome your comments, suggestions and information to help inform the scope of issues, potential effects and range of alternatives evaluated in the EIS.

Monday, January 9, 2017

4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The Loft at the Red Building
20 Basin Street
Astoria, Oregon

For more information about the Columbia River System Operations EIS, please visit this website: <http://www.crso.info>

Information is also available by calling 800-290-5033.