

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Good journalism will overcome era of 'alternative facts'

American media has never been more in the crosshairs than today.

Like Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela and Vladimir Putin in Russia, President Donald Trump has made hay while hammering on a press that he describes as "fake" and the "enemy of the people."

And he has found a receptive audience. Trust in the media is at an all-time low.

It is worth defining "media," as the vague and often pejorative term means lots of things to different people. To a growing number it means cable television news more than other media outlets.

In January, about 2.8 million people watched Fox News each night during prime time, 1.2 million watched CNN and MSNBC had 1.1 million viewers. You can bet that can't-take-your-eyes-off-him Donald Trump was one reason for that increase, and likely a reason why those numbers will stay sky high.

At the same time, about 38 percent of Americans, about 120 million, said they read a printed newspaper on a regular basis according to a 2013 Pew Research study.

Coverage sets us apart

We are a newspaper, so we come from that journalistic perspective. We go to meetings, go to schools, go to businesses, tag along, talk to people, ask blunt and sometimes annoying questions, read budgets, go to wrecks, go to fires, write down what we see, gather documents, write down what authorities tell us, ask more questions, then report.

We hope to do it with a mix of entertainment, humor and lots of local flavor — but information is always at the core.

Despite the popularity of cable news, newspapers remain a vital institution at the local, state and national levels, as Willamette Week's Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Nigel Jaquiss pointed out during a Columbia Forum presentation last week.

Getting hooked

Cable news does television remarkably well. But the line between journalism and entertainment is often blurred there. Many news shows consist of pundits propping up, then attacking what are often straw man arguments from an opposition figure.

Talking heads are often invited to voice a side of the issue, not to help the audience understand the issue. It's great television — especially if you have a dog in the fight — but often it's not journalism. It's borderline debate, it's definitely entertainment and it's designed to keep you hooked.

That doesn't mean the best journalism doesn't cause intense reactions, as Jaquiss also pointed out as he detailed powerful stories he's covered and the reactions to them. In local papers like The Daily Astorian, we strive to balance impactful stories and provide readers with context and relevant, documented facts that help round out the entire story. It's not always life-changing stuff, more often it is the day-to-day machinations of the world we live in and the government we pay for, but it's news about our community that moves the narrative forward.

Credible sources

Many seem willing to trust government and its president implicitly, to take one person's word for what is fake and what is true. We believe that's dangerous and that good journalism is more important when it's under attack.

"Sure the president is beating up on the press," Jaquiss said. "I think they can take it — we can take it. I think what you've seen is reporters who do their jobs by digging up documents, finding people who will talk, finding people who will tell the truth — they'll be able to keep that guy honest. If anybody can keep that guy honest, I think the press will be able to do that."

No media outlet is perfect all the time. But you should be a wise consumer, not reading outlets based on whether you agree with their conclusions, but those who make you smarter and more informed.

The media is going through the wringer right now, but it will outlive this era of "alternative facts" and — with your help — be better than before.

WHERE TO WRITE

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A tourist ambassador to the world

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

An artist of intensity, Claudia Toutain-Dorbec has dedicated her life to sharing her artistic vision with others, through hospitality and community involvement in the arts. As the owner of the Cannon Beach Hotel, the city's longest-running lodging facility, she sees her city of Cannon Beach as a canvas for her dreams, and the dreams of others.

There is history within the walls of the Cannon Beach Hotel. At 113 years young, the one-time Becker Building is the city's longest continuously operating lodging facility.

Toutain-Dorbec bought the hotel with her then-husband and business partner, Stephen Tuckman, from a former nurse who had turned it into the first bed and

breakfast in Cannon Beach.

Toutain-Dorbec presided over the hotel's centennial celebration in 2004, and is now the proprietress of the hotel and cafe, the Courtyard, the McBee Cottages and Hearthstone Inn. "There's one phrase I use for the hospitality business: 'It's a daunting job,'" Toutain-Dorbec said. "It's a tough business. You work Christmas, you work Thanksgiving — you pretty much devote your life to the business. It's like having dozens of plates spinning in the air, when you see one is starting to topple a little bit, you've got to run over there and catch it."

"We have a maxim we live by over at the front desk," she added. "It's called, 'Do it now.'"

After Tuckman's death, Claudia married the renowned war correspondent Pierre Toutain-Dorbec. "Fragile and tired" after retirement, he sought a quieter life.

The battlefield veteran now enjoys days very different from the 35 years he spent as a photojournalist for some of the most prestigious international publications of the 20th century in locations ranging from Tibet, Nepal and China to Paris, Quebec and Los Angeles.

The Toutain-Dorbecs break up their "daunting job" as hoteliers with at least six weeks of vacation every fall, often to their home in France.

Season in the garden

In 2011, Claudia Toutain-Dorbec, a painter, had the experience of a lifetime when invited as an artist-in-residence at the Monet Gardens in Giverny, in Normandy, France.

"An invitation from the Foundation Claude Monet in 2009, based on my American Southwest botanical work, to spend one week per month there for five months in 2010, with a private studio, could not be refused," she wrote in the subsequent book chronicling the experience, "A Season at Monet's Garden."

Monet's aesthetic jibed with her own sensibilities. "He was a genius, a fabulous artist, a foodie, an incredible gardener," she said.

Toutain-Dorbec was intrigued with Monet's love of Japanese art and landscape design. But she faced a considerable challenge when she began her residency.

"When I arrived at Monet's Garden, I was told I could not cut a flower," she said. "I almost got on a plane and flew back. I dug under dumpsters, I climbed on the ground for flowers, I bribed a gardener with expensive shears. We arrived one day and found gardeners digging up all the tulips which they would not let me touch and which they were replacing with geraniums, fallen in a

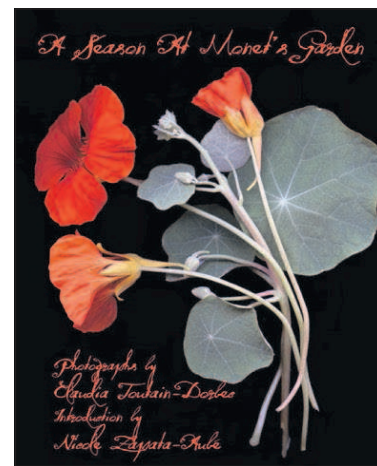


Submitted Photo

The Cannon Beach Hotel.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
 Claudia Toutain-Dorbec in front of the Cannon Beach Hotel.



Submitted Photo

"A Season in Monet's Garden," by Claudia Toutain-Dorbec. Drawings from the book are on display at the Seaside Library.

storm."

But she found enough assistance from gardeners and staff to complete her project. The book debuted at the New York Botanical Gallery in 2011 and celebrated its Oregon opening at the Cannon Beach Art Association Gallery in 2014.

Photos from her season in Giverny are on display at the Seaside Library through April 25.

International destination

In 2015, the Toutain-Dorbecs broke up their annual travels with a trip to Italy and last fall to India.

The exotic and varied international background of the couple — along with the natural beauty of the North Coast — both invites and successfully attracts an international clientele to Cannon Beach.

"We do get quite a number of French people," Toutain-Dorbec said. "I've noticed a serious uptick in international travelers. It's been

pretty much the case along the north Oregon Coast. They really enjoy Cannon Beach. It's got those designations 'most beautiful beaches.' It's been named among the 'most beautiful places' by National Geographic. That really got their attention."

The city's growth as a welcoming place for the arts adds to the appeal.

A couple from Berlin, here for their third year, "loves the Coaster Theatre," Toutain-Dorbec said. And that brings us to another one of her endeavors, as a commissioner for the city's Tourism and Arts Commission.

Funds for the arts

The commission provides funds from the city's hotel tax to encourage tourism in the off-season, with programs like the Cannon Beach Juried Art Show, the yoga festival, Savor Cannon Beach and the Spring Unveiling Arts Festival, among others.

Events like these are "critical to our community," Toutain-Dorbec said. "I'm hopeful that every hotel owner in this town feels that way. Because that's part of what makes this community so vibrant and alive and brings people in every year. People from the cottage tour, they come from all over the country. We have wonderful authors that come to 'Get Lit at the Beach.'"

Seven commissioners from diverse industries in Cannon Beach distribute the funds, with the goal of putting "heads in beds."

"We're looking to bring people here to stay in town for a couple of days and provide them with an activity that helps them to get to know Cannon Beach as a community, our culture, our environment, our beautiful flora, our fauna, Haystack Rock, Ecola Park," she said. "Last year we had \$285,000 to give away. It's not peanuts."

Arts organizations partner with county nonprofits to create an event that brings people to the community, "and we bring them the funding to make that happen."

Any promotion or event contributing to the arts or that would bring in tourists from more than 50 miles away would receive consideration. Tourism and art fund grants can be used for expenses like personnel, special events, signs, promotional materials and advertising.

The commission is "always looking for events to bring guests to our community, and we're always looking for new projects," Toutain-Dorbec said.

What a great way to follow your bliss in Cannon Beach!

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