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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

SECRET SANTA SENATOR



State Sen. Betsy Johnson took the time to spread some holiday cheer around in St. Helens recently, according to a story in The St. Helens Chronicle (<https://tinyurl.com/betsyevie>).

The senator attended the 35th annual Toy N Joy auction, where a red pedal-operated toy fire engine with two teddy bear passengers had caught the eye of Toy N Joy board member **Larry Weaver's** grand-niece, **Evie**. The child, who was helping Santa (**Merle Pence**) at the auction, tried to buy the fire engine from Santa with \$20 Weaver had given her, but was very disappointed to find that she was out of luck. The toy was part of the auction. But ... it just so happened that Sen. Johnson had overheard the conversation.

When the fire engine came up for auction, it was a hot item. The winning bid, \$150, was by Sen. Johnson, who immediately gave the toy to Evie. The child's reaction? "That's absolutely amazing." The pair are pictured, with the coveted prize, courtesy of Julie Thompson/The St. Helens Chronicle.

Sen. Johnson's gift was much more than a kind gesture to a child in the spirit of Christmas, it was a tribute to Evie's great-uncle. "Larry has done so much for the citizens of this county over the years," she told The Chronicle, "and this was just a small way to show my appreciation for all that he's done."

A SIMPLE ACT OF KINDNESS



"It was at the post office in Astoria the other day, and while putting my keys into the lock to unlock my car door, they fell to the ground," **Eric Jenkins**, executive chef at Buoy Beer, wrote. "I am with a cane because of a knee problem and a bad back, so bending over is very difficult for me right now."

"The curb is high where I was parked, so looking where my keys were on the street, seemed to me like a daunting task to retrieve my keys. I started by trying to use my cane to hook them up towards me, but after several attempts, this wasn't working."

"A man, older than myself must have seen me struggling and came up to me offering his help. At first I declined, out of stubbornness, but he insisted, easily retrieving them for me. Unfortunately, I didn't catch his name, but thanked him for helping me."

"Thinking about it later, I wish I had asked his name," he added. It is these simple acts of kindness, that give me hope in a time of chaos and divisiveness in the world today, and which make me proud to live in a community where people help each other, no matter how small the gesture may seem."

GETTING FORTIFIED

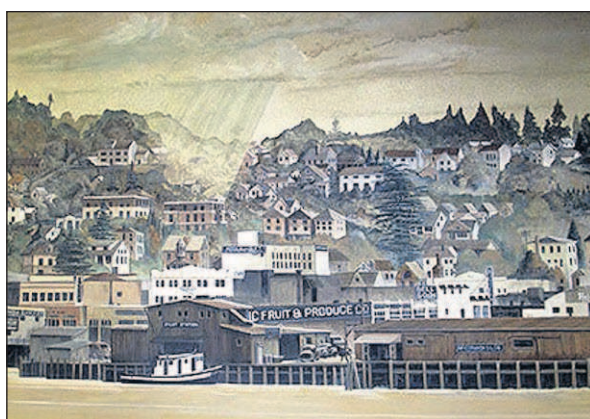


Did you know that 212 years ago the **Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery** was in the throes of building **Fort Clatsop**? They started construction on Dec. 9, 1805. The Oregon Encyclopedia describes the fort as consisting of two cabins, parallel to and facing each other, with a parade ground between them that had gates on each end (<https://tinyurl.com/FortC1805>).

One cabin had three rooms for the enlisted men. The other was a bit more elaborate, containing a room for the captains, one for the Charbonneaus (**Sacagawea** and family), an orderly room and a storeroom. A sketch of what the fort looked like is shown, courtesy of the Oregon Encyclopedia.

The corps moved in on Christmas Day, and stayed for 106 miserable, soggy, flea-ridden days, 94 of which were rainy. 'Twas not the season to be jolly.

AN APPRECIATION OF DETAIL



Fun rerun from Oct. 19, 2012: When both of the **Builders Supply** businesses closed, artist **Jo Brown** wondered what would happen to the history-inspired murals she and her son, **Josh Brown**, created in the buildings.

"**Randy Stemper** saw me doing a mural behind Sears in 2001, and we exchanged info," Jo told the Ear. "When his new store was finished, I started a seven-year collaboration of researching photos and local stories while painting those results 10 to 20 feet up on scaffolding."

In the Astoria store, "the west wall shows Astoria's shoreline from 1936, inspired by a photo given to me by the **Compleat Photographer** folks," Jo explained. A small segment is pictured. "I had to work the murals around my other work commitments during this time," she continued. "Randy and his employees would put the scaffolding up when I came back into town, and sell it after I left."

The southeast four bays in Astoria have images of a fisherman's house and drying seining nets, a blacksmith shop, pipe layers and an Astoria city street.

"Randy said, 'All good things take time,'" Jo noted. "This quote is in one of the murals. My son, Josh, helped me finish the last two southeast bays, and then he went on to the Gearhart store and did those murals by himself."

The Gearhart murals also cover historic subjects. The entire west wall is the Gearhart Inn. The north wall has five bays, including a locomotive, Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, downtown Gearhart, the train station and an indoor pool.

Thanks to **Jan Heald Robinson**, director of Revitalization Partners, the murals in both stores were able to be photographed in detail, so they are preserved digitally. You can see them here: <https://tinyurl.com/JoMurals>

"Randy's appreciation of detail," Jo added, "and my love of this historic city, made this one of my best muraling experiences ever!"

Note: The **Columbia River Maritime Museum** now owns the Astoria building and uses it for storage. The museum's curator, **Jeff Smith**, noting that the murals add "historical ambiance," assured the Ear that they are preserved, and safe.

'NEVER GIVE UP'



In 2014, there was a story in this column about **Stephen Swift**, who had been zig-zagging all over the country on his bicycle since 2012. It all started when he became depressed after a cancer diagnosis, and his daughter suggested he take a bike ride.

His motto became "never give up." After about 14,000 miles, he figured he'd met thousands of people, and had 29 notebooks full of messages from friends he'd made along the way. He was heading home to Newport to write a book.

This November, Stephen once again appeared at The Daily Astorian. The Ear missed his visit, but reporter **Edward Stratton** took his photo. Stephen told Edward he was headed for Portland to complete his ride. Yes, he had gone back out on the road again. More than once, it seems. One estimate puts his travels at between 18,000 and 20,000 miles.

"I did make it home," he told the Ear in a recent email, "and the true reason for the long, long bike ride was because of my wife's death. Just did not want to be alone. Better making new friends than being home all alone." Whether he'll stay home, this time, remains to be seen.

'A NATIONAL TREASURE'



Maritime history fans take note: The **longest painting in North America**, and probably the world, the 1848 "**Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage Round the World**," at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, in New Bedford, Massachusetts, is being restored, Yahoo reports (<https://tinyurl.com/whalepan>).

The quarter-mile-long, 8-foot-high painted panorama originally toured the country by train and wagon. Mounted on a system of cranks and wheels, the panorama gradually unrolled across the stage while a narrator told the rapt audience stories about being at sea, whaling and visiting far-flung ports around the world.

Over the years the panorama deteriorated, and the whaling museum has spent \$400,000 to preserve and digitize it, hopefully so it can go on display again one day. Conservator Kate Tarleton is pictured with the panorama in an AP photo by Steven Senne.

"It's a national treasure," project manager D. Jordan Berson said, "that's been out of the spotlight for too long."

LOCAL BREVITIES



Tidbits from **The Daily Morning Astorian** published **Thursday, Dec. 15, 1887:**

- The last rail on the railroad connecting the Columbia River with California was laid last Tuesday.

Note: Construction of the **Oregon and California Railroad** began in Portland in 1868. In 1872, after laying track to Roseburg, there was a long delay due to lack of funding. After being taken over by Southern Pacific, the railroad finally made it to the California border in December 1887 (<https://tinyurl.com/oanderr>).

As an aside: The railroad was originally owned by **Ben Holladay**, a transportation magnate who had quite an impact on Seaside. His Seaside House Hotel, built in 1871 before Seaside was even incorporated, was probably one of the city's first elite tourist attractions (<https://tinyurl.com/bholla>).

- This "**runaway horse**" business is getting altogether too common. Scarcely a day passes without a horse running amok through the streets ...

- For Sale: One large, strong horse, sound in wind and limb. Price \$30 (about \$747 now). Apply to A. E. Allen, Skipanon.

- Active work on the **Fort Stevens jetty** has ceased. If the barges are depended on to furnish stone for that work, it will be 2011 AD before the work is completed.

Note: Construction began in the 1880s, and an article about the 5-mile long **South Jetty** being completed appeared in the January 1898 edition of Scientific American (<http://tinyurl.com/sjet1>). The project came in at 45 percent of the original estimate, or \$2,025,650 (about \$57 million now). An illustration from the Scientific American article is shown.

- Three runaways, two dog fights, and a knockdown yesterday, and still some folks complained there was no fun.

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED



The Dutch police have ended a project that used **eagles** to swoop in and **intercept illegal drones** with their claws, according to Engadget.com (<https://tinyurl.com/nethereagle>). It turns out there really isn't a great need for drone-hunting eagles, after all. A photo of an eagle closing in on its target is shown, courtesy of Politie.

Plus, the program was expensive, since the eagles had to be raised from chicks and then trained. Worse yet, the raptors were easily distracted by more appealing (as in edible) prey. Not to worry, the retired eagles are getting new homes.

Incidentally, the Dutch police also dropped their rat tracking project, which had the critters sniffing out illegal fireworks, cigarettes and human bones, among other things. It seems making the rats "operational" wasn't exactly feasible.

COMMUNITY NOTES

SATURDAY

Sit & Stitch — 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Homespun Quilts & Yarn, 108 10th St. Bring knitting, crochet or other needlework projects to this community stitching time. All skill levels welcome.

Columbia Northwestern Model Railroad Club — 1 p.m., in Hammond. Group runs trains on HO-scale layout. For information, call Don Carter at 503-325-0757.

Spinning Circle

— 1 to 3 p.m., Astoria Fiber Arts Academy, 1296 Duane St. Bring a spinning wheel. For information, call 503-325-5598 or go to <http://astoriafiberarts.com>

SUNDAY

Cannon Beach American Legion Women's Auxiliary Breakfast — 9 to 11:30 a.m., American Legion, 1216 S. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach.

Military Officers Association of America, Lower Colum-

bia River Chapter — 5 p.m., annual Christmas Dinner and Meeting, Astoria Golf and Country Club, 33445 Sunset Beach Road, Warrenton. All U.S. armed forces officers or former officers, retired, active, reserve and warrant officers are invited, as well as U.S. Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officers. For information, contact Capt. R. Stevens (U.S. Coast Guard, ret.) at 503-861-9832.

Line Dancing — 5:30 to 8 p.m., Seaside American Legion, 1315 Broadway. For information, call 503-738-5111. No cost; suggested \$5 tip to the instructor.

Seekers Group — 6 to 7:30 p.m., Pioneer Presbyterian Church, 33324 Patriot Way, Warrenton. Group discusses issues facing religious faith in the modern secular world. All are welcome. For information, call 503-861-2421.

MONDAY

Chair Exercises for Seniors — 9 to 9:45 a.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Scandinavian Workshop — 10 a.m., First Lutheran Church, 725 33rd St. Needlework, hardanger, knitting, crocheting, embroidery and quilting. All are welcome. For information, call 503-325-1364 or 503-325-7960.

Grace and Encouragement for Moms — 10 to 11:30 a.m., Crossroads Community Church, 40618 Old Highway 30, Svensen. GEMS group is a time for moms to relax and enjoy each others' company. Free childcare is provided. For information, call Rachael Bidlecome at 503-458-6103.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225

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