

# OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



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KARI BORGEN  
Publisher

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## OUR VIEW

# Boone epitome of the citizen legislator

Deborah Boone's announcement that this will be her last year as a state House member for the North Coast sent leaders of both major parties scrambling to consider how best to replace her.

In determining what qualities are desirable in the next person to represent District 32 in Salem, voters might want to look at Boone herself.

Her credentials when she began her seven terms were on point; it was almost as if she had served an apprenticeship. She had worked for 16 years as a legislative staff member for seven lawmakers, including eight years with Elaine Hopson, the Tillamook educator she replaced. She knew how the system worked, the convoluted processes for how a bill becomes law, and the pressing issues. And she had started fostering key relationships needed to be a success in the state Capitol. She also brought to the table her experience serving as a Clatsop County commissioner.

In the years that followed, Boone has served our region well, with modesty and an earnest simplicity, never begging applause or seeking the limelight. In her retirement announcement, she did not brag about accomplishments. Instead, she thanked the district for the privilege of being able to serve.

Her background as an owner of several businesses helped her when drawing up budgets or assessing spending priorities. Her maternal side, and the courage she has shown as her late husband's caregiver since his cancer diagnosis, was reflected in her compassion for constituents. As a member of Doernbecher Children's Hospital Foundation Board, she worked to help children in need. She also supported Head Start and was an advocate for abuse victims.

Boone's service as a Hamlet vol-

unteer firefighter taught her about hands-on leadership and teamwork. When vehicles plunged off the highway in South County, she joined fellow volunteer firefighters in turnouts, helped clear the path for rescue crews and made life-affecting decisions without hesitation.

### Government more complex

The original state legislatures in Oregon — and elsewhere around the nation — began with part-time, citizen legislators. Those elected would take a break from their normal vocation for the limited months of the session, returning home when the work of their state was done. Because of this, they brought expertise from farming, fishing, logging, schools and businesses. They were already hard workers. And they offered a nuanced awareness about regional priorities. They knew their neighbors' concerns — because they listened to them.

Somewhere along the way that commendable concept morphed into the creation of a new breed of professional legislators. We realize the key leaders in the House and Senate must work full time to keep the state running smoothly. Budgets are larger and Oregon government has become more complex, fraught with legal concerns.

But that has ballooned into a system where we observe lawmakers flavored by an "inside-the-(Salem)-Beltway" attitude. Too many think they know



Cory Grogan/Oregon Office of Emergency Management  
Rep. Deborah Boone, D-Cannon Beach, in 2014 at "Race the Wave," a tsunami evacuation fun run highlighting local preparedness accomplishments.

best for people in Seaside, Gladstone and Klamath Falls without ever visiting those places — where real Oregonians live. They lack that human connection.

### Foresight in planning

Boone has been a refreshing counterbalance. She has been especially attuned to the fragile, cyclical nature of the coastal economy. Much of her efforts have focused on protecting and preserving fishery-related jobs, while encouraging retraining and alternatives for those edged out of the shrinking industry.

Emergency planning rarely garners headlines — except when there is a disaster and a community is not prepared. Boone has led from Day 1, raising awareness about the vulnerable nature of the low-lying Oregon Coast to tsunamis, earthquakes and severe storms. She has championed seismic upgrades for emergency service build-

ings and the broadening of ocean mapping so agencies can better prepare for "the big one." Some critics have been derisive to her zeal, though this somewhat abated following the Japanese tsunami in 2011. One day, possibly soon, we will all thank her for her foresight.

When the dust settles on this calendar year, perhaps Boone will take some applause as she moves to the next phase of her life. But not right now. You can bet that she will work for House District 32 constituents right up to the moment her successor takes the oath.

Her colleague, state Sen. Betsy Johnson, sums Boone up. "She is just one of those good human beings. It's likely the public will not appreciate how well they have been served by her — someone who was capable and robust and unassuming. Her district is a better place because she was there."

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# A haven for the jet set — before there were jets

Gearhart's November referendum on short-term rental rules tore a community asunder with a binary choice: repeal short-term rental regulations put in force or to leave them be. Everyone in the city of 1,562 — of those, 1,245 registered voters — picked a side, and those who could vote locally propelled defeat of the repeal. Measure 4-188 failed by a lopsided 77 percent to 23 percent.

Gearhart's 100th anniversary as an incorporated city in 2018 comes in the aftermath of that bruising debate.

"This has been going on since 1918," Gearhart historian Bill Berg said at a post-election celebration at McMenamins. "It's all about the fabric of the community."



R.J. MARX

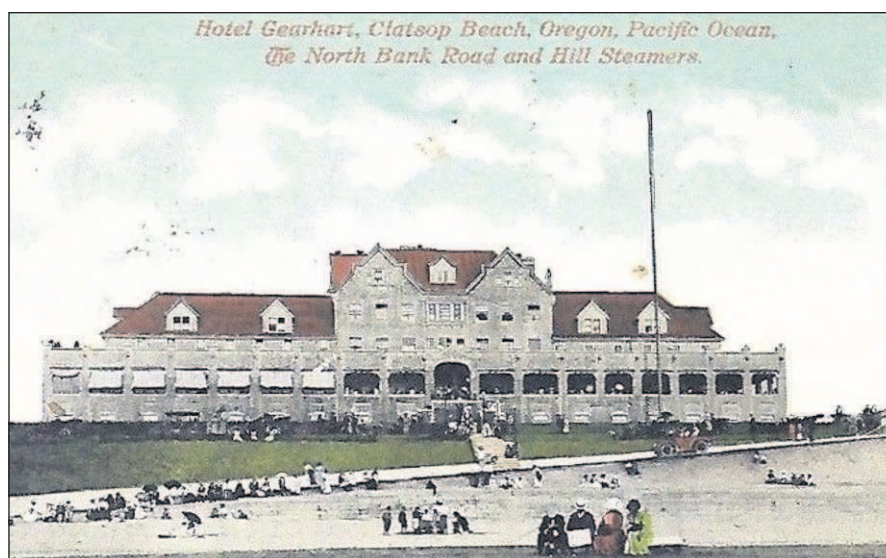
culture — one of 400 such societies around the nation — presenting orator William Jennings Bryan, educator Booker T. Washington and composer John Phillip Sousa.

Cannery and sawmill entrepreneur Marshall Kinney, who brought the Astoria & South Coast Railway to Gearhart, developed the Gearhart Golf Course in 1902, touting it as "the finest in America."

The Kinneys envisioned Gearhart as a "wildness playground for culturally elite Portlanders seeking fresh sea air, picnic on the dune meadows and cozy beach cottages set amidst virgin forests," Donna Pizzi wrote in Portrait Magazine.

Even fussy residents of Astoria ventured south and liked what they saw in Gearhart: "Last Sunday, a number of Astoria golfers visited the links and were well pleased with the condition of the grounds," the Signal wrote in May 1916.

Along with golf, swimming was only a few strokes behind. The sport transformed the North Coast, and Gearhart, as published in "A History of the Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club," Club member



Gearhart in 1915.

Arthur Cavill was "an aquatic Pied Piper in Portland leading everyone in Portland off to Gearhart for mid-winter plunges into the ocean."

In the summer of 1914, Professor H.A. Ludwig took the "first plunge" into the Gearhart natatorium, described as a 60-foot-by-40-foot tank — "the largest of its kind in the Northwest."

"It is larger by several feet than the tank at the Multnomah Athletic Club," the Signal wrote.

In July 1915, a headline read: "Gearhart building active," recounting the building of 17 homes at Gearhart Park ranging from \$2,500 to \$4,500 each, along with development of several new streets.

In August, a golf tournament came to Gearhart with "enthusiasts from Walla Walla, Lewiston, Spokane, Seattle and Portland."

The new American pastime of auto-biling had come to Gearhart, with "almost every cottager having a car here," the Oregonian wrote in 1917. For those too young to drive, "the little ones are rejoicing over their possession of their favorite ponies, as the riding school is now in full swing and the lads and lassies are seen each morning riding along the beach at low tide and through the woods when the tides are too high to get to the beach," the Oregonian reported.

Cookbook author James Beard wrote vivid accounts of Gearhart summer life in the early 20th century, when families

came for the seashore while father stayed in the city to work, rushing to the shore each week for a family reconnection. Beard spent weekends and summers on the Oregon Coast, where his family prepared elaborate picnics and cooked over an open fire at the beach, ending "an endless variety of chowders, salmon, clams and crabs," according to a biography of the celebrity chef.

### Enter Gearhart

As the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, the nation's thoughts moved from recreation to battle on an international stage.

In Gearhart, residents — many of them over 50 years of age — joined the Home Guard to protect the Lower Columbia River District.

The social season opened on schedule, but headlines shifted to news from overseas, enlistment announcements and Liberty Fund drives.

"In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Gearhart Park was part of the town of Clatsop and was known simply as a vacation destination for folks coming in on the train to visit the beach and stay at the hotel," Mayor Matt Brown said in December. "In 1917, the local residents who worked at the hotels, the train station, and in other capacities decided they wanted a residential community to call their own."

They wanted the town to reflect the

views of the families who lived here year-round and decided to form the city of Gearhart, he added.

In early 1918, the town of Clatsop became officially incorporated as the city of Gearhart.

"You can see in Gearhart today the legacy that was built by this small group of local settlers, workers, and families that wanted a residential community of their own," Brown said.

### A new charter

Gearhart residents filed a petition to incorporate in 1917; a vote followed in January 1918.

"A general improvement of the city will take place during the coming season and those who are interested will strive to make Gearhart one of the best places on the coast to spend the summer and winter months," wrote the Signal. "Here's success to Gearhart, our neighbor."

Voters "almost unanimously" voted for adoption of a new charter, defining boundaries, naming officers and establishing laws governing street improvements.

Gearhart's first mayor was P.A. Lee, from 1918 to 1920. F. L. Hager served as auditor and Judge D.B. Schroeder as treasurer. W.H. Moffett, D.B. Hensley, Fred Ober and Henry Ober Sr. were the city's first councilors.

Shortly after, William Samuel Badger, a contractor and road builder who moved to Gearhart in 1915, was appointed to fill a vacancy. With his selection, Badger was the first African-American to serve in public office in Oregon, a state with racial exclusion laws on the books during his term and remaining law until 1926.

He later owned a wood and coal fuel supply business. With his wife, Emma, he operated Badger's Chicken Dinners for 23 years.

"The city of Gearhart has only been incorporated for the past year and the officers elected will put that beautiful little summer resort on the map where it belongs," wrote the Signal in 1919.

By 1920, the city of Gearhart had a population of 127. Since then, it has grown — for some, too fast; for others, not fast enough.

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