

OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

10 years ago this week — 2008

The landslide that hit First and Commercial streets in Astoria in January 2007 began moving again about a month ago — slowly, almost imperceptibly — according to Astoria Public Works Director Ken Cook.

Unfortunately, financial aid for permanent infrastructure fixes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been moving at a similar speed.

But city leaders are optimistic the pace is picking up. Unsuccessful the first time they appealed FEMA's decision to deny funding, they are hopeful a second appeal filed last month will do the trick.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is not going to ask NorthernStar Natural Gas Co. to resubmit its permit application for the Bradwood Landing liquefied natural gas project.

And that's fine with the National Marine Fisheries Service, according to a letter sent Friday.

The action has LNG opponents worried that NMFS might have been under political pressure to change its position.

A beloved urban trail has been renamed to honor a beloved Astoria citizen. A new sign will proclaim The Richard Fencsak Cathedral Trail.

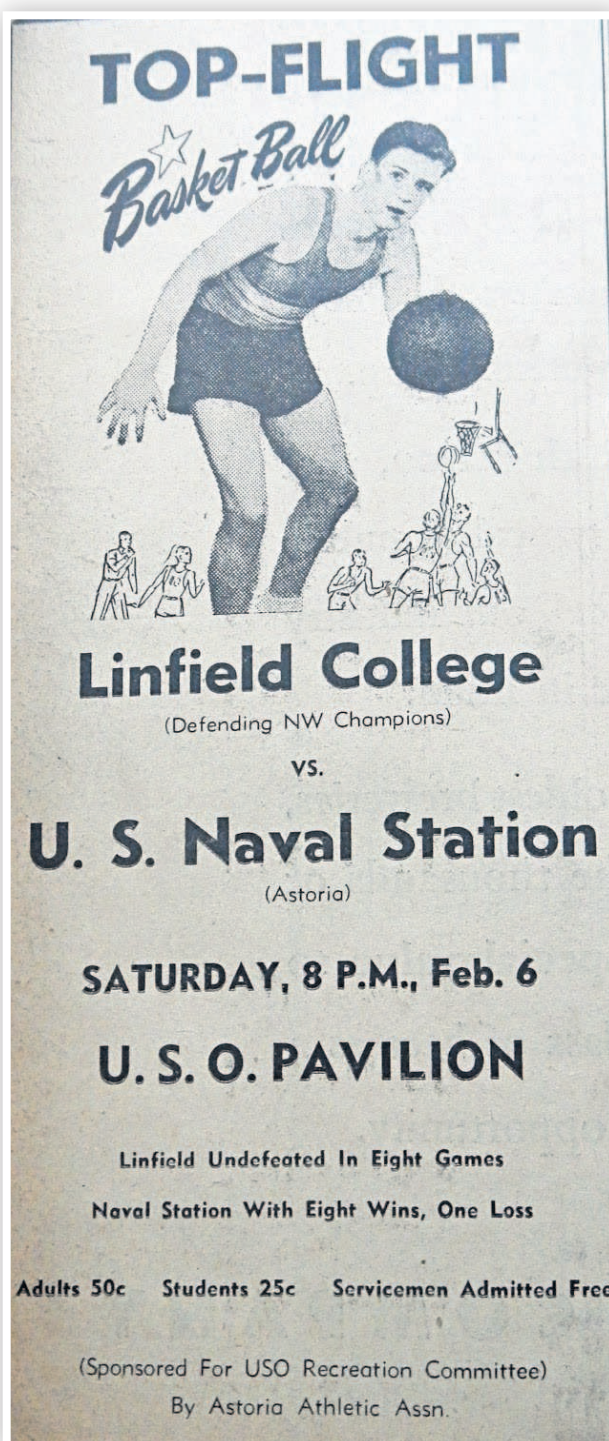
Fencsak is very ill and has done a lot of work in the community and on the city's trails, said Astoria City Manager Paul Benoit before the Astoria City Council's unanimous vote Monday in favor of the name change.

"He loves those trails so much. I've never met anyone in my life who glories in nature so much," said Fencsak's wife, Arlene Layton, in an earlier interview.

Fencsak, who owns Bikes and Beyond in downtown Astoria, has been a longtime contributor to The Daily Astorian. He wrote a column on outdoor sports and later became Coast Weekend's restaurant critic, earning the affectionate moniker, "Mouth of the Columbia."

50 years ago — 1968

A bronze plaque commemorating establishment of the nation's first community television cable system



The USO building, built in 1942, still sits at the foot of 17th in Astoria.

in February, 1949, will be erected in Astoria Column park as result of permission given by the city council Monday night.

The plaque was given the city six years ago by National Cable Television association, through Gov. Mark Hatfield.

The council voted 4-1 to approve the project, overriding objections of Councilman Roy Duoos,

who felt the plaque was commercial in nature and "completely out of place" in the column park. He favored forbidding all plaques there except those connected with the column and local history.

Councilman Bill Wilson said he understood the first TV antenna was on the J.J. Astor hotel, but that he saw nothing wrong with the marker in the column park.

Clatsop County's largest agricultural income crop, the production of mink pelts, is facing a marked decline.

Marvin Hille, manager of Oregon Fur Producers, said five mink ranchers in the county have gone out of business during the past year. This means a loss of 3,000 breeding females to an industry, which boasted 24,000 female mink in January, 1967.

The mink industry began in Clatsop County in the early 1930s and showed a steady increase until last year. A steady decline in price per pelt has been noted in some colors since 1956.

Foreign imports of pelts have cut deeply into profits of the domestic mink rancher, Hille said.

Secretary of State Clay Myers, followed by a swarm of Portland press representatives, came here Thursday morning to see the \$1 million Pacific Riviera development at the mouth of the Necanicum River which suddenly has found itself the center of a storm of unwanted publicity upstate.

Myers, a member of the State Land Board by virtue of his office, said he was concerned about the problem of possible damage to clam beds and about possible infringement on the Land Board's rights in managing submerged and submersible lands.

75 years ago — 1943

Contrary to reports about the city Saturday, Astoria meat markets are open today. For the most part, however, the butchers are busy with other things besides selling meat. Said one representative market man, "Yes, we're open; and we have a few smelt and a bit of meat — what you see there on the show case. We have to answer the phone and be here to tell people we haven't what they want, you know, and it's always possible that some rancher might bring us in something."

"What's the answer? Well, I wouldn't know," continued another. "It looks like a shortage of help on the ranches, to me. How else can you explain the diminishing returns in the Portland stock yards. They're not getting in more than half the cattle, sheep and hogs they did a year ago up there with an additional 100,000 people to feed. Yes sir, it looks bad."

Astoria's Fighting Fishermen last night pulled a typical Astoria basketball trick in coming from behind in the second half to blast Tillamook on the Cheesemakers' floor, 38 to 28. The win was Astoria's 10th consecutive victory, with no losses, and gives the Fishermen two legs on the district No. 10 championship.

It's time to end the scam of flying pets

One day, we may all owe a debt of gratitude to Dexter the peacock.

At Newark Airport recently, a woman tried to board a United Airlines flight with Dexter. She described him as her emotional-support animal. But given that peacocks are large birds and there is not much evidence of their therapeutic benefits, United said no, Dexter could not board.

A predictable social-media storm ensued, both pro- and anti-peacock. By late last week, United Airlines decided it had enough of making ad hoc decisions about traveling animals and announced a tighter new policy. Dexter, unwittingly, may have struck a blow for sanity.

If you spend any time on planes, you've probably noticed the surge of animals. There have been pigs, monkeys, turkeys, snakes and oh-so-many dogs, often sprawled across crowded cabins. Delta alone flies about 250,000 animals a year — not even counting those tucked inside carry-on bags or checked in cargo holds — more than double how many it flew in 2015.

The number of problems is rising, too. A large part-Labrador mauled a man on a flight to San Diego last summer. A recent Delta news release included some words that don't normally appear in a corporate news release: "urination/defecation" and "barking, growling, lunging and biting." According to a labor union for flight attendants, more passengers are suffering allergy attacks, and more are arguing, or worse, over animals.

I'm not going to claim that flying pets are one of the country's biggest problems right now. That's a high bar, after all. But I do find this situation to be a fascinating case study of how mass cheating can become acceptable — and how decent people can make decisions that are more selfish than they realize. It is one of the downsides of a modern culture that too often fetishizes individual preference and expression over communal well-being.

This story begins with progress, in the form of a 1986 law forbidding discrimination against handicapped air travelers. The law made sure that physically disabled people could travel with service animals. It also rightly applied to nonphysical disabilities. Some autistic children, for example, function



AP Photo/Tali Arbel

Oscar the cat pokes his head out from his pet carrier travel bag on his way to John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Oscar is a cat of the world with remote-controlled toys and his own Instagram account, but he doesn't like flying.



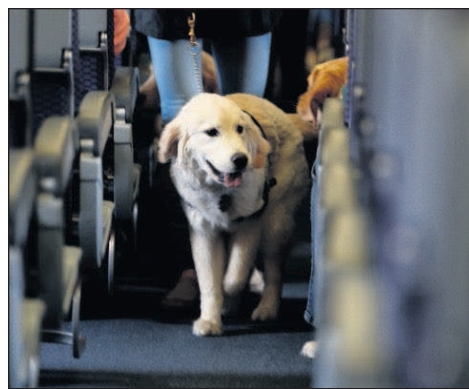
AP Photo/William Mathis

A sign marks a pet relief area in New York's JFK Terminal 4.

better with a trained dog.

The trouble started when pet owners realized that they could game the system, because airlines did not require much proof of medical need. By claiming one, people could bring an animal on board without putting it in a carry-on bag and without paying a fee that typically runs \$125.

It's true that some people honestly



AP Photo/Julio Cortez

A service dog strolls through the aisle inside a United Airlines plane at Newark Liberty International Airport.

believe they have an emotional condition that an animal solves. But they are often confusing their preferences with actual medical needs. As a recent front-page story in The Washington Post dryly put it, the effectiveness of emotional-support animals "is poorly substantiated through studies but widely embraced by the public."

Once animals became more common on planes, the trend fed on itself. Pet owners figured that if other people were cheating the system, they might as well too. A cottage industry sprung up in service of low-level fraud. For \$30 on Amazon, you can buy a bright-red dog vest that reads, EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. With a quick web search, you can find a therapist to diagnose you long-distance. Fill out a form, and suddenly you're certified as having an illness that requires animal attention.

All the while, people told themselves they weren't doing anything wrong. (How often have you heard a version of, "My pet is friendly and harmless"?) But people weren't thinking about the collective cost of their actions — about the many children afraid of sitting next to a dog, about travelers with serious allergies, about flight attendants charged with keeping cabins safe and, most of all, about truly disabled travelers.

"As a person who is blind, my access rights are being infringed upon when somebody passes off a fake service dog," Tom Panek, an advocate for the blind, told CBS News last week. At airports, disabled travelers with service animals are sometimes getting harassed by fed-up airline employees and passengers. Inside crowded planes, untrained animals have attacked service animals.

The last few weeks may have brought a turning point. First Delta and then United — following L'Affaire Dexter — announced stricter rules, requiring certification of animal training. Ultimately, I hope the Department of Transportation creates a fairly strict uniform rule for all airlines. (It should also ensure safe conditions for animals in cargo holds, which would make people comfortable with checking their pet.)

The whole bizarre situation is a reminder of why trust matters so much to a well-functioning society. The best solution, of course, would be based not on some Transportation Department regulation but on simple trust. People who really needed service animals could then bring on them planes without having to carry documents.

Maybe a trust-based system will return at some point. But it won't return automatically. When trust breaks down and small bits of dishonesty become normal, people need to make a conscious effort to restore basic decency.

David Leonhardt is a syndicated columnist for the New York Times News Service.