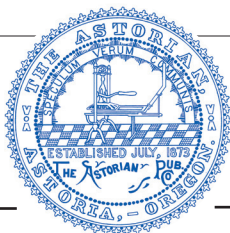


OPINION

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OUR VIEWS

Big gifts can be game changers

Museums are like universities. Their level of excellence depends on funding.

Since its founding in 1962, the Columbia River Maritime Museum has been a blue-chip organization. The museum's progenitor, Rolf Klep, laid that foundation. To build the nest egg for the budding collection of maritime objects, Klep pursued and haunted Portland's monied class.

Even within the context of such a well-funded institution, Peter Brix's recent \$1.5 million gift is a game changer. Executive Director Sam Johnson called the Brix donation "truly transformative."

Brix's gift contains two directives. One is to create exhibits of regional, national and international significance. These exhibits will use renowned exhibit designers. And he directs that such exhibits occur every two to four years. Johnson says we can expect exhibits on shipwrecks — here and globally — and on river commerce. This directive will also dedicate one of the museum's large galleries to the culture of the indigenous peoples of our region.

The second directive is to complete the digitization of the museum's library and its collections records. This will allow the museum's holdings to be searched online.

"This is like getting a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities," Johnson said.

When the Clatsop County Historical Society received an unexpected \$1 million gift from the estate of Ed Parker in 2000, the society gained an improved institutional life. When the Astoria City Council in 1999 made a \$1.3 million urban renewal grant for purchase of the Liberty Theatre, that decaying property was placed into local, nonprofit ownership.

Like those magnificent donations, the Brix gift will change the cultural landscape of Astoria and the lower Columbia.

While Brix was not part of Rolf Klep's founding board of directors, he has served for more than 35 years. Moreover, he plays the role of being the museum's muse. He's turned a portion of the wealth from his Columbia River maritime business into the intellectual and historical exploration of the storied world Astoria inhabits.

Another tip of the hat to firefighters

It was less than a year ago on this page that we were leading the applause for Clatsop County firefighters who answered the call to help fight wildfires around the region.

It is time to do so again after the latest round of fires — and the year is only two-thirds done.

As Brenna Visser reported, Clatsop crews and individuals have been answering the call with vigor and enthusiasm. Last year was a record-setting year, with more than 50 firefighters traveling to fighting multiple fires in Oregon and California.

This year there have already been three significant call-outs.

Folks like Lewis and Clark Fire Chief Jeff Golightly, Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy and Cannon Beach Fire Chief Matt Benedict know the value of this work. It goes beyond being good neighborly. The real-world experience that their staff and volunteers gain by traveling to help is priceless. We fervently hope we never suffer significant wildfires here on the North Coast. But if we do, these personnel will be better equipped and trained to perform their jobs.

The Substation, South Valley, Memaloose 2 and Dufur fires have been in the regional headlines, and our local heroes have figured at each. Many had a half-hour to get ready and leave — and by all accounts have performed with distinction.

Some, like James Hutchinson of Gearhart, come home with poignant stories. He had to lend his phone so a person could call their family to inform them their farm was gone.

"In those moments you take a step into their shoes, and it can be hard," he told Visser. "But you have to make it a motivation and remember you are there to help."

Beyond the memorable experiences of those who go, the summer fire season provides those who are not chosen an opportunity to step into leadership roles here on the Coast. They are able to work more shifts and respond to more calls locally. That "deeper-bench" development for our local fire departments benefits us all, too.

And we cannot credit these brave firefighters without again mentioning their families and employers who support their going. Spouses and children take on the worry every minute that their loved ones are in harm's way. They frequently have no consistent opportunities to reassure them, in part because of the erratic nature of cell service in rural areas. Employers worry similarly, while having to assign other staff at short notice to cover for their missing personnel while they are away.

While the state reimburses local departments for expenses associated with these trips, departments do have to pay some costs ahead. Chief Golightly estimates more than \$500,000 was paid out to all Clatsop County departments last year; some bills have not yet been paid.

Still, it is clearly the right thing to do. We send a clear signal to our Western neighbors that we are ready, willing and able to help. We all benefit.



Water under the bridge

Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers



10 years ago this week — 2008

Labor Day began as a way to celebrate the victories of ordinary working people. Those included hard-won gains over a period of more than a century that brought living wages, decent working conditions, old-age pensions and a host of other vital labor rights to millions of people. It was a day to rally everyday people around the idea that we can take nothing for granted, that we must protect all these things that have come to define the United States of America.

If Labor Day is about anything more than a three-day weekend, it ought to be about honoring the meaning of work and understanding how political choices affect working people.

A fire call to the Cannery Pier Hotel on Astoria's waterfront enlivened an otherwise uneventful Labor Day Weekend 2008.

The U.S. Coast Guard assisted a 40-footer in trouble near Willapa Bay, Washington, but reported a quiet weekend as throngs of people enjoyed the mixed weather on the North Coast. There were no reports of serious traffic accidents in the region, although nine died in crashes elsewhere in Oregon.

Clatsop County residents may not always see eye to eye on issues, but they definitely pull together in an emergency.

At the request of the Ford Foundation, the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire conducted a survey of rural counties in six regions of the United States to see how they're coping with social and economic change and how community attitudes toward themes like neighborliness are changing. The institute contacted 1,000 people from Clatsop County and 1,000 people from Pacific County in Washington in June 2007.

Respondents were asked about whether the community has a



1968 — Halted by state police at the Oregon end of the Columbia River bridge, motorcycle riders of the Gypsy Jokers club awaited inspection of their equipment by officers. The riders were later escorted northward by Washington state officers.

high level of trust and gets along. In Clatsop and Pacific counties, a whopping 89 percent indicated that folks get along and only 11 percent said there was a problem.

In another interesting result, the survey revealed that 33 percent of respondents in Clatsop and Pacific counties thought that in 10 years the community would be a better place. Some 47 reported that they thought it would be about the same. Twenty percent, however, thought it would be worse.

50 years ago — 1968

A hairy band of motorcycle riders calling themselves the Gypsy Jokers were halted by state police as they headed for Fort Stevens state park to hold a camp-in.

Most of the riders were from Washington points, according to Lt. William Flippo, officer in charge of the Astoria state police unit. Flippo said there were about 87 cycles in the group and a number of cars.

State officers issued more than 30 citations to members for such violations as lack of helmets, lack of head-lights, missing fenders and defective mufflers.

The town of Astoria, like its stay-at-home residents, enjoyed a quiet day basking in the late summer sunshine Labor Day, with sounds of traffic and industry muted, because of the lack thereof,

and a peaceful atmosphere prevailing.

Main scene of activity along Commercial was the bus depot during scheduled arrivals and departures, with weekend guests leaving and Tongue Point trainees returning from visits elsewhere.

A modern record is being set in housing construction in Astoria, building inspector Leon Overbay said.

Sixteen homes are under construction — the most being built at one time in the city since Astoria's early days. The 16 go with two new houses completed earlier this year. The modern-day record for new houses in one year is 24, Overbay said.

August's 55 permits included those for the new Bank of Astoria at West Marine Drive near Hume, McGregor's Supply company's proposed new building at 7th and Bond, six new houses and 47 remodeling jobs.

75 years ago — 1943

Navy blimps are going to be aerial observation posts for fishermen off the northern Pacific coast.

Vice Adm. Frank J. Fletcher, commander of the 13th naval district, Seattle, has arranged for the blimps to notify fishing boats of schools of fish which they sight.

Harold L. Ickes, coordinator of fisheries, said the system should save fishermen many hours in locating the schools and improve their catches, especially of sardine and tuna.

Signs were pointing to the greatest crowd ever to assemble for sports angling on the Columbia River when the Labor Day double holiday rolls around Sunday and Monday; and reported success during Thursday and today indicated growing catches by the accommodating chinook salmon.

Bradley Underwood, 10-year-old son of Walter Underwood, Chamber secretary here, landed unassisted a gigantic chinook salmon that weighed almost 55 pounds and well over 50. Mrs. Emil Bjork brought home a 45-pound bright fish and Dr. J.J. Pittenger grabbed off two 45-pounders in a matter of minutes.

Sports fishermen on the river are all agog over the reported catching of a tuna fish from a trolling boat Sunday near Point Ellice. So far the story of the unusual catch is strictly in the rumor stages with all attempts to identify the lucky fisherman unsuccessful. However, word of the tuna's capture has spread up and down the waterfront and is attracting wide interest among the thousands of salmon trollers here.