

Aya: He became the voice of tsunami preparedness

Continued from Page A1

As a child, those skills fueled Aya's sense of humor and propensity for pranking, said Hawley, who knew Aya since elementary school. He remembers one day when Aya figured out how to hook into the school's bell system and rang the bell early during a physical education class.

"He was just incorrigible until he graduated high school ... until he went into the Army," Hawley said. "But he was great fun to be around."

Aya graduated from Gabel Country Day School in 1943 and soon after decided to join the Army. After World War II, Aya attended Stanford University, where he earned his degree in philosophy, but soon after served in the Army again in Stuttgart, Germany, during the post-war Allied occupation of Germany.

In 1953, Aya moved to San Francisco, where he began his career as a researcher and statistician for the Pacific Bell Telephone Co. He continued to serve in the Army Reserve before retiring with the rank of major in 1968.

After more than 30 years, he retired from Pacific Bell in 1984 and moved to



Al Aya looked over equipment at the Cannon Beach Fire-Rescue Main Station that controls the tsunami warning system in 2017.

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Cannon Beach.

Warning system

Aya's curiosity and inclination to create came to define his local legacy in unexpected ways. Shortly after moving to Oregon, Aya was elected to the fire district's board, where he led the charge to design and install the famous "mooring" community warning system (COWS) for tsunamis at a time when tsunami

danger was not at the forefront of the community's mind.

In fact, Aya himself voted against funding the system the first time around as a board member.

"It'd been 21 years since the last tsunami in 1964, and at the time it seemed like a waste of money to invest in alarms when these events were so rare," Aya said in a 2017 interview.

But two days after the

vote, Aya remembered seeing a group of children building a sandcastle at the edge of the surf with no adults watching them. The sight made him wonder how these kids would know about a tsunami warning and inspired him to research and discover the threat of a tsunami hitting the Pacific Northwest was much more likely than people assumed at the time.

Rainmar Bartl, who

knew Aya both as a friend and colleague on the Planning Commission, remembers him talking about his research and "being ahead of his time" when it came to tsunami preparedness.

"At the time it was kind of revolutionary," Bartl said.

Before he knew it, Aya became the voice of tsunami preparedness, leading the drive to establish a warning system that was a first of its kind in U.S. and has been used as a model for others down the coast. In the 1990s, Aya led the push to move the town's fire station out of the tsunami inundation zone on Spruce Street and build the new station at higher elevation at Sunset Boulevard, said Garry Smith, the fire district's board president, who worked with Aya for years.

"If it hadn't been for his persistence I'm not sure if (the new fire station) would have happened when it did," Smith said. "He had the foresight and drive to get things done at the district. He contributed not just to the COWS and the fire station, but to all the projects, whether it had to do with the trucks, the equipment, fundraising ... He was an avid supporter of the fire department."

Finding humor

But even in something as serious as a tsunami warning system, Aya found a way to incorporate humor. When it came to test the warning system, he worried about how the public would react after hearing the loud alarms over and over for multiple days.

To lighten the mood, Aya decided to use a pre-recorded "mooring" sound he found in a BBC sound effects library instead of a regular siren.

"I was emailing with an author friend of mine, who is an archconservative guy, about the problem. As a joke, I thought because the acronym for our system was COWS — for Community Warning System — that maybe we could broadcast a mooring sound," Aya said in 2017. "He thought it was hilarious, and I figured if someone serious like him thought mooring was funny, maybe less serious people would, too."

Though Aya retired from the fire district in 2015, his voice is still the one that tells everyone to get to higher ground.

"It's kind of ironic ... now he's gone, but his voice is going to live on as the one who tells you to evacuate as long as that system is in place," Smith said.

Price: Homelessness is another challenge for the city

Continued from Page A1

The incoming council will miss Price and Nemlowill's experience, LaMear said. The mayor said she has always been impressed by how Price researches and prepares for each meeting, while Nemlowill was an eloquent and common-sense voice on difficult issues.

"I think it's challenging," LaMear said. "I found that being on the Planning Commission was wonderful preparation for being on the council and being on the council was certainly essential, to me, to being mayor. They'll have some catching up to do."

'Pretty fun'

"I don't know if it's the most fun I've ever had," Price said of her time on the City Council. "But it has been pretty fun."

Price ran unopposed for the Ward 3 seat in 2014, campaigning on, among other things, promises of government transparency and accountability and development that "respects Astoria's heritage, authenticity and natural beauty."

She vowed to encourage projects that were fiscally responsible, sustainable and served the public. She pushed to move drunk-driving cases from the city's Municipal Court to Clatsop County Circuit Court, a policy shift she shared with her husband, District Attorney Josh Marquis, who had sued the city over jurisdiction.

Price feels she met many of her goals.

Along with Nemlowill, Price focused on ways to ensure Astoria remained a year-round community. Her focus often turned to housing, though both she and Nemlowill struggled with how exactly city government could, or should, fill that gap. Both councilors zeroed in on homestay lodging as a related, but concrete, issue.

Like other cities, Astoria has grappled with the rise of Airbnb-type vaca-

tion rentals of entire houses. In Astoria, these rentals are not allowed but are difficult to regulate. Price and Nemlowill believe vacation rentals have the potential to change the character of the city's neighborhoods and reduce the amount of housing available to average workers.

Both Price and Nemlowill pushed for, if not a cap or outright ban, at least stricter rules around homestay lodging.

In December, the City Council adopted a homestay lodging permit, which includes fees, regular inspections and other requirements.

"I want to keep Astoria a unique experience just like you do," Price told homestay lodging operators at the time. "It's just empirically clear that limiting short-term rentals is the way to do that."

But there have been some challenges in her efforts to preserve or create what she envisions for Astoria.

Price was vocal in her opposition to a pawn shop that opened downtown in 2017, asking, "Can we ban pawn shops?" and citing concerns about used gun sales. But the shop's application was already in process and some in the community questioned why one business should be singled out.

Last year, when the Parks and Recreation Department was looking at ways to refine its budget and was forced to cut programs, Price, along with Brownson, suggested implementing a \$3 fee on residential water and sewer bills—an idea that took staff time to research but that, in the end, was shot down. Nemlowill, in particular, was not supportive, wondering how a fee on a necessary service like water was fair or directly related to parks.

'Down to enforcement'

Price said the new regulations on homestay lodging were one of the more important things she helped

accomplish. But the issue also highlighted an enduring challenge, and one that frustrated her.

"All of these things come down to enforcement," she said. But enforcement has been hampered by scant city resources and understaffed departments, especially where City Council priorities hit the Community Development Department.

"It's really held us up," she said. "It holds everybody up."

Getting fully staffed next year is crucial for the city, she said.

Price also wishes the City Council could have made more progress on developing Heritage Square, the city block next door to City Hall that hosts the Garden of Surging Waves and the American Legion but is also home to a hole in the ground where an old lot caved in. The hole has remained fenced-off and an eyesore.

In 2015, the City Council considered building a new library and mixed-use housing project at Heritage Square. Price, along with then-Councilor Russ Warr, reversed course after seeing the estimated \$29.7 million to \$38.7 million price tag.

The project was later rejected in favor of renovating the Astoria Library.

Another challenge the city faces, and one Price was involved with while on the council, is how to address homelessness.

Price served on a homelessness solutions task force LaMear led with Police Chief Geoff Spalding. She voted with other councilors to strengthen the city's "no camping" ordinance to address illegal campsites in the woods. Price walked through the camps when crews went to move the homeless out, asking people if they had been put in touch with social services.

The task force and the City Council have not identified concrete solutions for addressing homelessness, but Price and LaMear believe the discussions

forged stronger relationships between social service groups, city leaders and other stakeholders.

'Disappointed'

Price began the year hoping to continue her work on the City Council, though in a different role. She announced her intention to give up her seat and run for mayor in June after LaMear

said she would not seek re-election. Price encouraged Herman to run to replace her on the council.

But in August, Price withdrew from the race, citing family reasons.

"I was very disappointed I had to drop out of the mayor's race," she said. But, she added: "I'm comfortable with the decision I made. It was the right deci-

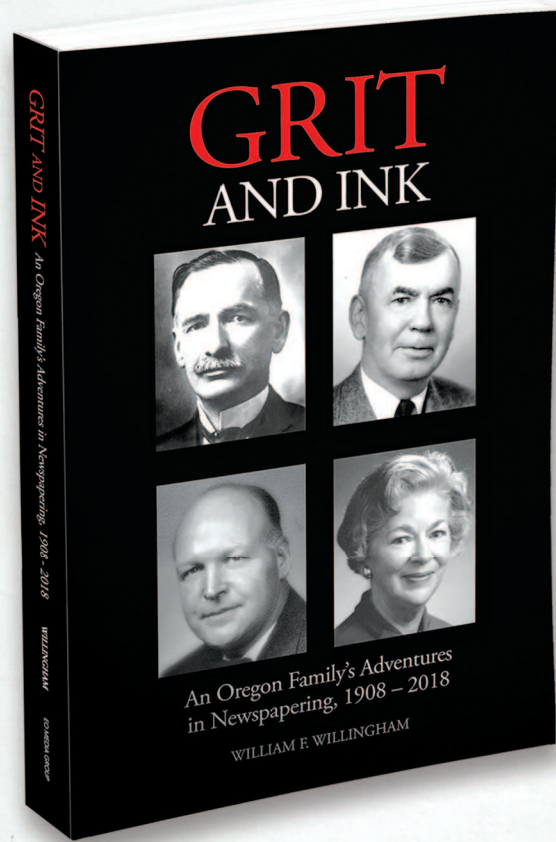
sion for me."

She is not sure if she will run for any other elected position again.

"Having the honor of being elected to office to be a caretaker for this jewel of the Pacific Northwest is one of the greatest things that I've ever been able to do," she said before a City Council meeting in mid-December. "I thank all of you."

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Elk: 'You just can't predict what they're going to do'

Continued from Page A1

said she and others have witnessed people feeding elk near the spot where the cow climbed on the car, a civil infraction in Warrenton.

The Warrenton Police

Department has received more than 60 calls about elk over the last three years, Sgt. Jim Pierce said. Most concern elk laying in the road and damaging property, with rarer instances of aggressive behavior by the

animals.

Pierce said he has never heard of an elk going out of its way to approach a car, but called it "a good reminder that these guys are wild, and you just can't predict what they're going to do."