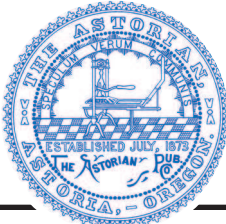


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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Founded in 1873

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Community is the antidote to loneliness

Good news arrives in many packages. The most startling and heartening moment I've seen lately arrived during the Liberty Theatre gala in November.

As state Sen. Betsy Johnson asked the crowd if anyone would give to the theater, a man sitting near the front raised his hand. Handed the microphone, he said: "My wife and I moved here one year ago." He expressed gratitude for how welcoming Astorians had been to them. He pledged a gift of \$1,000 to the theater's restoration campaign.



STEVE FORRESTER

Jennifer Crockett, the theater's director, said more than 260 people attended the gala, contributing more than \$1,100 in donations, \$11,000 in ticket sales, \$18,200 from auctions and raffles, and \$269,000 to a special appeal by Johnson.

The hero in this story is the town — more precisely, the people who reached out to this man and his wife. It is a symptom of a healthy community.

I recognize that this couple's experience has not necessarily been everyone's experience as a newcomer. But it does make a point about the ingredients of a community. This is especially timely, because there is widespread hunger for community across America at a time when it is easy to feel anonymous.

Arthur C. Brooks recently wrote a penetrating op-ed on this topic titled "Loneliness is Tearing America Apart." Brooks' thesis, published Nov. 24 in the New York Times, is that America's "epidemic of loneliness" makes a vast swath of the nation susceptible to the extremes of the political spectrum whose advocates populate the Internet and cable television.

The antidote is community, wrote Brooks. More specifically, he quotes Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, who has written that the key is "to intentionally invest in the places where we actually live."

Building community is what this newspaper is about. And it is what the other newspapers of our company are



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A gala Nov. 10 at the Liberty Theatre in Astoria raised \$300,000 toward a capital campaign to modernize the historic venue.

about. When people ask me about the future of newspapers, my response is that as long as people value community, they will value a news source that reflects that community. Decades ago the iconoclastic newspaper and magazine editor Clay Felker explained his latest creation, New York Magazine, saying that it would hold up a mirror and show people themselves.

The startling phenomenon I discovered while serving as the Astorian's editor was the people who did not want to have human contact. Some would hide behind email addresses. But one of my

frequent antagonists, who used his real name, resisted all my attempts to have conversation in person. It struck me then as an unhealthy attitude, and I see it in what Arthur Brooks has described.

In the book "Grit and Ink," author William Willingham writes about how our sister newspaper, the Blue Mountain Eagle, responded when a sect of the Aryan Nations out of Idaho sought to create a homeland in Grant County. Led by Publisher Marissa Williams and Editor Scotta Callister, the newspaper convened a community meeting to talk about the prospect of becoming

the home of a nativist, white nationalist community.

It was a remarkable and long discussion, and it drew the national press. In my favorite moment, Callister chewed out a Wall Street Journal reporter for talking loudly on his cellphone while citizens were addressing the group. In that brief encounter, an authentic local editor lectured a self-important national newsmen on the meaning of community.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Daily Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

Water under the bridge

Compiled by Bob Duke
From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers



10 years ago
this week — 2009

Leaders in Clatsop County's five cities welcomed the new year with cautious optimism, knowing there are tough financial times ahead.

In Astoria, a top priority is paying for federally ordered improvements.

In Warrenton, the challenge is keeping up with construction.

In Cannon Beach, the new mayor has a "sustainability" agenda in the works.

In Gearhart, the water system is front and center.

In Seaside, the agenda includes selling the old library, improving sidewalks and battling flooding.

Roadside trees weighted by ice continue to cause disruption on U.S. Highways 30 and 26 to and from the North Coast, blocking the highways and bringing down power lines.

Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin has kick-started a campaign to get rid of them — even though state laws require them.

The irony is that the Oregon Department Transportation doesn't like them either.

"They don't work for us very well," said Dan Lepschat, the ODOT forester. "Frankly, we don't want them."

Nine rooms at the Tolovana Inn in Cannon Beach suffered damage when a three-alarm fire broke out Thursday night on the third floor and spread to the basement.

There were no injuries. Some of the rooms were occupied, and the tenants were moved to other units.

50 years ago — 1969

Astorians dug out Wednesday from the worst ice storm in many years as utility, television and highway crews struggled to restore service interrupted or cut off completely Tuesday night by a silver thaw.

State police said all highways were open out of the city, although chains were required on Highway 26 beyond



Undaunted And Unafraid We Meet The New Year!

Elderberry Inn and east of Clatskanie on Highway 30. Highway 101 reportedly was bare with icy spots.

The constant contest between the stork and the grim reaper in Clatsop County reveals a happy ending, with births well in excess over deaths.

According to the county health department, there were 405 births registered as of today, against 322 deaths during 1968. On the stork side of the ledger, baby boys nudged out baby girls by one, with 194 boys born to 193 girl babies.

In 1967 there were 375 births in the county recorded, showing a substantial growth in population, baby wise, this year.

A harrowing tale of five-yard visibility and 60-knot winds during a rescue mission was related by Coast Guard Lt. Comdr. Tom Finnegan on his return to Astoria Coast Guard Air Station from Sand island near Portland.

Finnegan was pilot of a helicopter which saved a stranded duck hunter from the island Tuesday. The hunter's companion died of exposure.

The public's ownership of Oregon's dry sand beaches was upheld again today by Circuit Judge J.S. Bohannon in an opinion in the case of the Surfsand Motel at Cannon Beach.

Judge Bohannon held that Oregon's beach bill is constitutional and ordered William Hay to remove the cable between pilings driven into the beach.

75 years ago — 1944

Quietly, new years came to Astoria and the lower Columbia last night right on schedule time. Many amuse-

ment places were already dark when the midnight hour struck. Today Astoria streets are deserted with all business establishments and offices closed for the holiday. Largest crowds of the new year celebrants last night were at the Labor Temple and Suomi hall dances with the night clubs fairly well filled.

The unsanitary condition of Astoria eating places was the principal topic of discussion at the Clatsop County Health Association meeting Thursday.

It was reported to the association that three cases of trench mouth had been handled in recent weeks by one Astoria doctor. One of these cases was directly traced to the dishwashing in a city restaurant.

The group conceded that the restaurant problems of insufficient, inexperienced and transient help contribute to poor standards of cleanliness, but agreed that the situation should be improved.

An outstanding feature of 1943 was development here of 453 public housing units, in trailers, dormitory units and apartments.

They are the Riverwood Parks project of 240 apartment units in Jeffers Gardens, 100 trailers in Astoria near Gyro field, 46 apartment units at the former site of the Warrenton soil conservation service camp near Warrenton and 67 dormitory beds in the remodeled old Astoria city hall.

Launched last week at the Oregon Shipbuilding company's yards in Portland was a Liberty ship named the Mary E. Kinney, in honor of Mrs. W.S. Kinney, first woman to be elected to the Oregon state legislature and an Astoria resident for years. Mrs. Kinney was elected senator from Clatsop County in 1923 and served two terms.