

# Lang: ‘He had a tendency to affect people’s lives in a positive way’

Continued from Page A1

“It’s a big loss to the 911 community and first responders and the U.S. Coast Guard family,” Rusiecki said. “He led a very full life. He touched a lot of people.”

Lang was born April 1, 1952, on Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. As the child of two parents in the military, he grew up traveling across the country before going to high school in Des Moines, Washington.

After high school, Lang graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1974. He served on the West Coast and in Ketchikan, Alaska, before earning his master’s degree from the Naval Postgraduate School in 1980.

Lang served in many posts around the U.S., including as commander of the cutter Iris, a buoy tender on the North Coast in the late 1980s to early 1990s.

After years of travel, he decided to settle in Astoria with his family in 1994.

“Astoria was the type of community where he felt most comfortable,” said Chris Lang, his son. “It was a small town, but close to the ocean, which allowed him to do what he loved most, which was to be out on the water.”

Chris Lang remembers his father as someone always trying to instill the same sense of adventure that was within him. He recalls a childhood of fishing, camping and long family road trips, as well as occasional excursions on the vessels his dad commanded.

Because he was often away at sea, he remembers his dad making the most out of the time he did get with the family, whether that meant volunteering to time swim meets or, later in life, becoming a very active grandparent.

“He was involved, but not overbearing,” he said. “He tried to have a guiding presence in our lives.”

After retiring from the Coast Guard, Lang took a job as the manager of emergency communications for the Astoria Police Department. It was there that Rusiecki realized he had unknowingly encountered Lang during his own tour in the Coast Guard.

As commander of the Iris, Lang once came to help Rusiecki, who was stationed at Cape Disappointment, respond to a bad fishing boat accident out near the Columbia Bar. He heard Lang giving commands over



Chris Lang  
**Dick Lang was a longtime Astoria resident and emergency communications manager for the Astoria Police Department.**

the radio that day, but never met him face to face until his job interview.

“Dick has a very distinct voice ... I could never forget that voice,” Rusiecki said. “When I came into my first interview, that’s when I put it together.”

When Lang started, the dispatch center was still running calls with index cards and handwritten logs. Each police department was working in silos, operating like individual dispatches.

“It seems like a no-brainer today,” Rusiecki said. “But it took nearly 20 years to consolidate everyone on that system.”

So Lang made it his goal to connect the county by updating radio technology and by introducing a computerized dispatching system — a feat largely accomplished by Lang self-educating through hours of reading and trial and error, Rusiecki said.

“Dick was probably one of the smartest people I’ve ever met. It’d be nothing for him to read a 4-inch Microsoft book to learn how to replace a server,” he said. “Today, if we lost a server, I wouldn’t even dream of picking up a book and reading how to replace a server. But he was just that kind of guy.”

Sometimes, the knowledge paid dividends. During the Great Coastal Gale of 2007, the type of radios Lang had were some of the only

ones that worked, Rusiecki said. Other times, his self-sufficient nature would get the best of him.

Rusiecki recalled one time when Lang tried to replace the battery in the system’s uninterrupted power supply. A wrong touch led to a jolt of electricity blowing the screwdriver out of his hand.

“At that point we thought, ‘Maybe we should be getting professionals to be doing this,’” Rusiecki laughed.

As a boss, Lang is remembered as a quiet but fiercely supportive mentor by dispatchers like Shirley Krepky.

“(Dick) was instrumental in making dispatchers feel like they were someone in the department,” she said. “Often times, it’s been assumed (dispatchers) are like clerical people, and they’re not. We’re first responders. Dick was one of the first people in our department who stood up for the dispatchers. He listened to us, and would fight for our rights.”

In 2005, Krepky and Lang had a shared experience of going through cancer treatment at the same time.

“He was always so positive and upbeat about his treatment,” she said. “When you work with someone for so long, you see them in a number of different situations, good and bad ... he was always very humble, graceful and supportive.”

Two years later, Lang recovered from cancer but decided to retire for good. He refocused his energy into being the van coordinator for Disabled American Veterans, an advocacy and assistance group that drives veterans from the North Coast to their medical appointments in Portland and Vancouver, Washington.

For Chris Lang, his father’s work there was indicative of a lifetime of trying new things and spreading positive energy everywhere he went.

“He had a tendency to affect people’s lives in a positive way a lot stronger than he realized,” he said. “I think if I learned anything, it was ... find what it is that you’re passionate about, and figure out how to include others in it.”

# Looters: ‘All this important information is now lost because of this illegal excavation’

Continued from Page A1

Rachel Stokeld, a cultural resource specialist at the park, said in a statement.

“All this important information is now lost because of this illegal excavation.”

Though the park has seen evidence of digging in the past — most recently about a year ago — the looting off the Netul River Trail is the most serious crime to happen at the park since the theft of a bronze statue of Sacagawea and her baby, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, in 2008.

Four people were implicated in that crime. The statue, which cost around \$20,000, turned up at a scrap metal yard in central Oregon, hacked into pieces. The thieves had reduced it to about \$200 worth of scrap, Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin said at the time.

The statue has since been replaced.

“Anytime you have something like this happen, it definitely hurts,” Burpee said about the looting. “We’re so passionate about what we do: preserving these amazing sites and also making them as open to experience as possible.”

Unauthorized digging at an archaeological site is prohibited, as is the possession of metal detectors in national parks. The tools can only be in the parks if they are disassembled and stored in a vehicle.

Investigators ask that anyone who was hiking on the Netul River Trail



National Park Service  
**Lewis and Clark National Historical Park conservation intern Kelli Daffron measures where looters disturbed an archaeological site near the park’s Netul River Trail.**

around or before March 20, responsible for the crime or anyone who has information call or text the National Park Service’s tip line at 888-653-0009.

**Clatsop Post 12**  
**Good Friday - April 19th**  
**Tuna Casserole**  
 with Tossed Salad & Garlic Bread  
 \$8.00 • 4pm until gone  
**Karaoke Dave at 6pm**

---

**April 21st**  
**Easter Brunch**  
 Ham with Scalloped Potatoes,  
 Veggies, Salad, Rolls or Cornbread  
 \$8.00 • 11am - 1pm  
**Bingo at 3pm**

**ASTORIA AMERICAN LEGION**  
 1132 Exchange Street • 325-5771

**WANTED**

**Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber**

**Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA**

Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500

# the Astorian

## MOTHER/DAUGHTER LOOK-A-LIKE CONTEST

*Think that YOU and your MOM look a lot alike?*

Upload the photo that most captures your shared features before April 21. Voting starts April 24 through May 5. The top vote getting photos will be featured in our special Mothers Day Weekend Edition on May 11.

**Look for the entry form online at [DailyAstorian.com](http://DailyAstorian.com)**

# 7th Annual Community Acapella Singing

## Celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus

### Saturday April 27th at 3:00 pm

**Astoria Church of Christ**  
 692 12th Street

All invited.  
Refreshments served.

For information call:  
 503 791-3235  
 or  
 503 468-8397