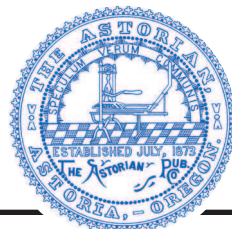


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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Founded in 1873

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE



Rita Goldfarb

Kindergartners get a tour of Haystack Rock. What a treat in Cannon Beach!

From editor to civilian in Cannon Beach

Note: Country Media has acquired the Cannon Beach Gazette newspaper from EO Media Group, effective May 1. Gazette editor R.J. Marx will continue to edit EO Media's Seaside Signal.

It's hard to write a farewell column when I've only been here four years. That's less than the lifespan of some razor clams.

My first experience in Cannon Beach was at Bill's Tavern.

I was sitting at the bar after an interview in Astoria for the job of editor of the Cannon Beach Gazette and Seaside Signal. A gentleman was sitting next to me; we struck up a conversation. I told him I was thinking of moving here to edit the paper. He said, "Do it!" As I was leaving, I was informed that "Jim" was the owner of Bill's.



R.J. MARX

My first City Council meeting in Cannon Beach owes a great deal to Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn. As the meeting was about to get underway, I heard a voice address the room: "Does anyone in the audience

have a car parked in front with New York plates? Your lights are on."

Yes, that was my late, lamented Audi A4, vintage 2004 that somehow survived the cross-country trip. I gratefully thanked the chief for saving me the opportunity of meeting the Moons of Gary's Service Center that same night.

Insider knowledge

I was lucky to have some real live Cannon Beachers to show me the ropes. Primary among them was my predecessor, the brilliant and accomplished Nancy McCarthy, now a city councillor.

She was, and is, tuned in to almost everything in Cannon Beach. From the start, she gave me the 4-1-1 on the "presidential streets," Tolovana bunnies, the Coaster Theatre, dory fishing.

Nancy introduced me to the local scene at Wave Crest and informed me the real dialogue was happening at Cheri's.

Elaine Murdy at the Cannon Beach History Center and Museum made available her archives and her considerable wisdom, helping to bring the characters alive outside of the bound volumes of back issues I pored over those first months.

Rex Amos, the city's very unofficial artist-in-residence (and that's going some, considering the great talents in town) provided an ongoing angle on the characters, customs and styles of this unique city — including the great author Ursula K. Le Guin, whom I was fortunate enough to have corresponded with before her death last year.

I love Sleepy Monk's Rachel and Rebecca and Jason at Sea Level. For anyone to get the flavor of the community,



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

I've got to number this beached whale in Falcon Cove as a highlight in my Gazette career.



Lady Gaga

Lady Gaga and friend in Cannon Beach, as posed on Twitter.

get a cuppa.

My friends Laura and Gregg introduced me to all the great restaurants in town and provided convivial dinner dialogue.

Of course I'll still be eating with them and in the same restaurants, I just won't be snapping photos of the appetizers.

My wife says it will be a relief walking into Cannon Beach and not having to hear someone say, "This is off the record."

But it's not like I'm moving away.

I'll still be in the same office on North Roosevelt in Seaside as the Signal goes weekly on May 10.

I see that as a tremendous opportunity, a goal from the start — I believe that community newspapers are best served with a weekly continuity.

Lady Gaga slept here

What is best about Cannon Beach is its level of discourse, quality of life and community, with a citizenry as eloquent, elevated and inspired as the denizens of



Rex Amos

Rex Amos, among the artists and literati that make Cannon Beach great.

Santa Fe, Aspen or Jackson Hole.

And like those cities it carries with it an international cachet and its own branding, courtesy Mother Nature: Haystack Rock. No wonder "Lady Gaga slept here."

But that's just Cannon Beach from the outside. The only way to get to know a community is to cover it on a day to day, week to week, year to year basis. I had the rare opportunity of following this forward-thinking community as they led the way — and lead the way — in addressing threats posed by the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

I have watched the struggle to provide affordable housing for an ever-growing workforce in the midst of a countywide crunch. I've witnessed the Cannon Beach Academy grow from the seed of an idea to a full-fledged, accredited elementary school program meeting a critical need for families in the community.

I've seen the city's status as a haven for craft beer, wine and spirits from the

local scene to the national stage — from Puffin to Pelican to Public Coast.

Whether in Cannon Beach for a lifetime or if you've come for a few days, everyone has the feeling that the city is "their own." People will make "must stops" at galleries, bookstores, boutiques and now, cannabis shops. I'll be able to say, one day, "I remember when Cannon Beach voted to permit dispensaries."

Looking ahead

It was cool to experience it from the inside. But like an open-ended drama, what's next?

Will Cannon Beach build a shadow city at the Southwind site or elsewhere?

What will be the result of dune grading discussions — a topic debated since the 1980s?

How will Cannon Beach's popularity with tourists balance with critical environmental concerns?

Of course these questions won't be answered tomorrow and probably not the next day.

That said, it's going to be bittersweet for me. I know the Gazette is in good hands with Country Media publishers Steve and Carol Hungerford, editor Joe Warren and his mighty team.

They do a stellar job in Tillamook County and newspapers throughout the Northwest. Joe's a longtime newsman and understands the community's heartbeat.

The Hungerfords owned the Gazette previously — they know and love Cannon Beach. They'll be taking stewardship of this beat — and it is a stewardship — as the city moves forward. You'll see new faces holding reporter's notebooks at the meetings and maybe some of the familiar ones as freelancers or staff.

As a newsman, I can't help but wonder what I'll be missing.

But then I can always read about it, in print and online, in the Gazette!