

# PRIME TIME

GET  
TO THE  
PORT  
LIGHT  
CAFE  
BEFORE  
IT DIMS

BY RYAN HUME

I can't say how many times I have driven by the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center without ever considering stepping foot on the renowned base just south of Warrenton.

This has nothing to do with curb appeal. From either direction on Hwy. 101, the camp isn't nearly as intimidating as a medieval castle, but looks more like a fenced-in pasture where no one would be surprised to find a cow lazing about.

In reality, situated on 1,800 scrubby acres of the Clatsop Plains, with three miles of unbridled coastline, the base offers plenty of diverse landscapes, including a Military Operation in Urban Terrain site (done up as a fake Afghanistan village), for armed forces units and police departments the nation over to practice tactical, aquatic and aerial training exercises.

So the reason I never expected to leave any tracks at Rilea is the business conducted there is not the business that I am in.

Or so I thought.

There is a password that gets mere civilians like myself past the security checkpoint, no gun range reservation required.

After a brief I.D. check at the guardhouse, simply state, "I'm going to the Port Light," and you're in.

It only took me a moment after parking to shake the initial shock of seeing so many people walking around with AR-15-style rifles as that's not my usual. Just inside the door of the restaurant and lounge, a sign commands: "Weapons must be cleared and magazines removed. No weapons allowed after 1700."

The Port Light Café was opened at Camp Rilea in December 2013 by owner and manager Jeanette Bosworth and has been serving soldiers, police officers, veterans and the public ever since. After retiring

## Port Light Cafe

★ ★ ★

Price: \$

Cash and card accepted

Vegetarian options: Grilled cheese, salad bar, the occasional daily soup

33194 B Patriot Way, Warrenton

Hours: 10-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday

10-midnight Friday-Saturday

Closed Sunday

from the Merchant Marine, Bosworth continued to build upon that 35 years of service by grilling burgers, wrapping wraps and pouring brews to her large extended family of service men and women.

Some trace of those visitors remain right above the bar, where the wood is papered with dollar bills, each Sharpied with the name of a unit or department that has spent time at Rilea and thus the Port Light.

The building itself has the utility of a barracks, but a pool table, fireplace and plenty of ephemera splashed across the walls — in equal parts military and marine memorabilia and cheeky roadside kitsch — home the place up and make it more comfortable.

And a little R & R is key to the Port Light's charm.

In her experience, hauling supplies and equipment to such disparate locations as Gulf War-era Iraq, Bosworth says there are not a lot of other places on base like the Port Light.

Which is why it's sad to say the Port Light Café will be shuttering by the end of December, Bosworth informed me. She will not be renewing her lease with the Oregon Military Department. While this will book-mark Bosworth's extended service to six



Ryan Hume

**The Port Light's prime rib dinner is the real standout on the menu. It includes meat sliced by the chef, a salad bar, dinner roll, assorted vegetables and a twice-baked potato.**

solid years of operation, she did say there are interested parties considering taking it over.

Even with the future uncertain, the food and service at the Port Light still aims to create fast family from those visiting soldiers. During my recent visits, there

were some 500 troops at Camp Rilea and Bosworth stayed open on a Sunday when they are usually closed to feed that mass.

Though there is no table service, the counter service at the bar is warm and

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