



The Dalles Bridge.

Ed Hunt

Bridges: Monuments to human cooperation

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not completed until 1883 because the East river’s busy ship traffic required a span high enough to allow a constant stream of world commerce to pass under it. So too does our four mile long span of the Astoria Bridge arch its back 197 feet off the water to allow the endless movement of world trade to glide under its girders. Imagine the problem given to its engineers — design this bridge to be high enough that ships can pass under it — not just sailing ships of yesterday or the modern cargo ships of 1964 — but all the ships of the future as well.

I have talked with people who remember what it was like before these bridges we take for granted, who remember the wooden truss bridges, the swing bridges and draw bridges that would daily bring travel to a halt to allow water traffic to pass. I have talked with those who remember when the ferries were replaced by the Astoria Bridge and I myself have seen the way the removal of the toll across that bridge changed patterns of commerce and commuting in the region.



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A festival being set up on a bridge that crosses the Rhine between Germany and Switzerland.

everyday — that make my life here possible.

By necessity, then, bridges are monuments to human cooperation and belief in future and practical investing in progress.

Those are things worth celebrating, worth wondering at and worth appreciating the next time you cross a bridge.

Ed Hunt is a writer and registered nurse as well as the author of “The Huckleberry Hajj,” a collection of essays available on Amazon.com. He lives in Grays River, Washington.



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Runners and walkers cross the Astoria Bridge during the Great Columbia Crossing.



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The Grays River Covered Bridge.



Jonathan Williams

The Brooklyn Bridge’s arch closest to lower Manhattan.

Crossing and considering bridges

I love to run the Columbia Crossing each year — to take my time to appreciate the marvel of the Astoria Bridge. So too do I love the Grays River Covered Bridge dinner — an annual 4H fundraiser that transforms the last covered bridge over a public road in Washington into a rustic celebration of local talent and bounty.

I love stopping at the top of the nameless practical bridges on my daily runs or motorcycle rides around the valley.

I get a thrill on a hiking trail when some wood structure deep in the forest carries me across the creek. I study it and wonder at the work that must have gone into transporting its materials miles into the woods — assembled just to await the passage of my hiking boots.

It is hard to build a bridge single handed.

I know first hand. A few years ago, I worked to build a sturdy bridge across the seasonal creek behind my house — something strong enough to ride a horse across. Even though the creek I needed to cross was only five feet deep and eight feet wide, it was hard to work the heavy railroad ties into place. Hard to make it solid and level while jumping from one side to the other. Building such a simple span over such a shallow creek gave me renewed respect for bridges I cross



Gretchen Darnell
Seaside, Oregon

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