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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

We will emerge from this struggle

Merle Chessman ran this newspaper during tumultuous times. As publisher of the Astorian-Budget, Chessman saw our newspaper through the Astoria fire of 1922. He managed the paper's survival during the Great Depression. And he did battle with the Ku Klux Klan.

Years ago, Liisa Penner and John Goodenberger helped me locate the home that Chessman and his family occupied. It is on the north side of Grand Avenue, across from and several houses east of the First Presbyterian Church.

I occasionally drive past the Chessman home. On that route last Wednesday, I looked in its direction and said: "Well, Merle, you wouldn't believe what's going on."

By the time I reached the stop sign at 11th Street, I reconsidered my blithe comment. "Well, maybe you would NOT be surprised at how the coronavirus has changed our world."

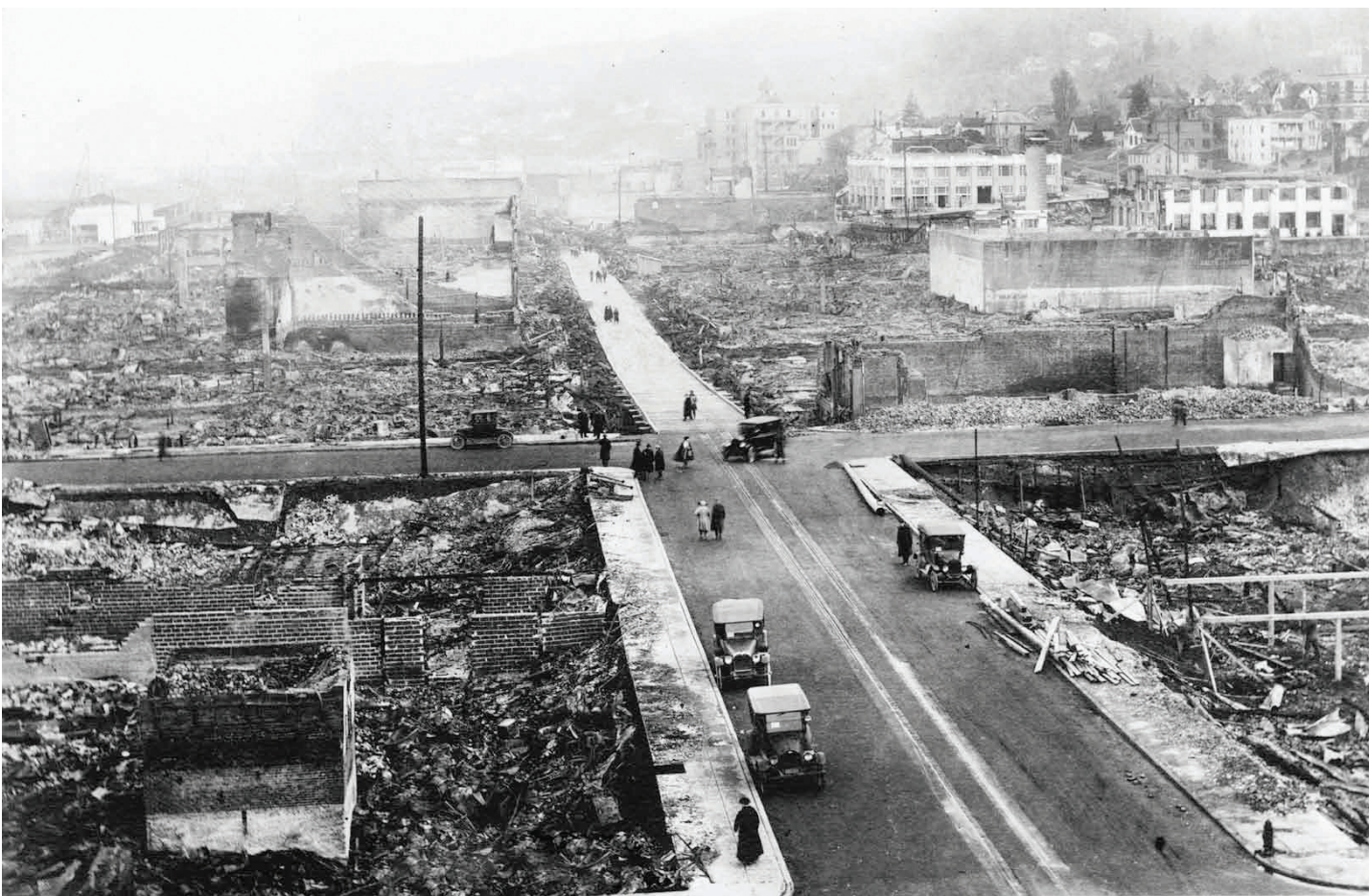
Global and local events turned Astoria upside down many times during Merle's life.

My experience corollary to Merle's was the Great Coastal Gale of 2007. Without power for five days, we managed to publish newspapers and keep our website current. I remember emerging from the semidarkness of our building to seek a cup of coffee. Walking down the street, I realized that I was stiff as a board from tensions of the moment.

The big storm passed us in a week. The great unknown of this pandemic is how long it will last. That prompts a different sort of tension.

Business challenges such as what our publishing company now faces are solved through intellectual rigor. But there is also an emotional side to decision-making at a time like this.

Fear is in the air. That is unhealthy, and it clouds judgment. I appreciate how Kari Borgen, The Astorian's pub-



Downtown Astoria after a devastating fire on Dec. 8, 1922.

Clatsop County Historical Society

lisher, is leading the newspaper. "If we lean into this, we'll come out the other side in good position," she says.

For most family businesses, this is an existential crisis — challenging our very existence and promising to change the way things are done in the months and years ahead.

A new generation of family owners is going through the coronavirus moment. During the Great Coastal Gale, my children were teenagers. Now they are in their 30s and sit on our board of directors. The pandemic's challenge will forever shape their perspective on leading during a crisis.

Our company, EO Media Group, and its subsidiary, Central Oregon Media Group, are coping with diminished revenue streams and changing workplace

norms. We are grateful that we were already deeply into digital publishing. During this period, more of our readers are consuming our news reports digitally.

The fortunes of Astoria's newspapers — D.C. Ireland's Astorian, the Tri-Weekly Astorian, The Daily Astorian, The Astoria Evening Budget and their successors — have been intrinsically bound to the fortunes of our city. This newspaper and its predecessors have tracked all of the town's ups and downs over 147 years.

Astoria and The Astorian are in a difficult struggle. We will emerge from it, ready for a new era.

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



Joshua Bessex/The Astorian

This house on Grand Avenue was Merle Chessman's home.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Peasant exploitation

The recent news conference instigated by the White House was more of a commercial for corporations to hawk their wares while masquerading as crusaders fighting the coronavirus.

The White House sidelined the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, while pushing greedy corporations in front of the microphone. President Donald Trump shamelessly used this human crisis to fuel more divisiveness, and blame the old government system (deep state/Democrats) for any delays in responding, while eschewing any personal responsibility.

The real goal Trump pursues is the elimination of government and the privatization of everything. This will further disempower the average American in stemming the tide of financial blackmail and hostage-taking corporate America craves.

Our financial structure hasn't changed much from the nobleman vs. peasant class system in medieval times. This is partially evidenced by the growing disparity between the poor vs. rich, and the steady erosion of the middle class.

Someone recently remarked to me that we should be grateful for the rich, because they're smart and try to help us. Seriously? This is a huge lie some of the powerful have promulgated for centuries, while quietly chloroforming any true potential for equality, dignity and respect for human life.

Corporations promote fear using the specter of scarcity in order to keep the less wealthy in a "rope-a-dope" position, to the point they're mindlessly express their gratitude for crumbs off the table.

This is truly the nobleman's sweet spot. Trump treats us like the fools we seem to be. What we accept, we teach. Resist corporate exploitation.

BRENTON KAHLE
Astoria

Old-fashioned way

This letter is my attempt to wade into possible results of inequality of voting rights. Sounds like a doctoral dissertation, but it's not.

There is no doubt, women are stepping up and running for office in unprecedented numbers and, by extension, registering and voting. Val Demings, Elizabeth Warren and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, to

name a few.

This is no surprise to me. Having coached boys and girls teams for 48 years, I can say unequivocally the girls care as much, train as hard and compete as ferociously as the boys. The question is, are the women voting in numbers greater than the men? For the sake of discussion, let's say they are. But why?

In America, we fundamentally believe in equal rights. Right? Historically, it's taken three amendments to the Constitution (13th, 15th and 19th) and the 1965 Voter Rights Act to make that belief real — in theory.

All women couldn't vote until 1920, even though the country started in 1787. Women's suffrage was the culmination of a 70-year crusade, started in 1850 by Susan B. Anthony, and ended by the huge contribution women made to our country's World War I effort. Yikes! I guess you could say they earned the vote the old-fashioned way.

So whether women show up to vote on Nov. 3 in bushels, truckloads, ships or parachutes, who is going to get between them and the voting booths? Not me.

So, the real question in 2020 is, are the guys going to suck it up, show pride and vote in numbers equal to the ladies? Maybe together, we could set a record.

CARL DOMINEY
Astoria

Shoutout

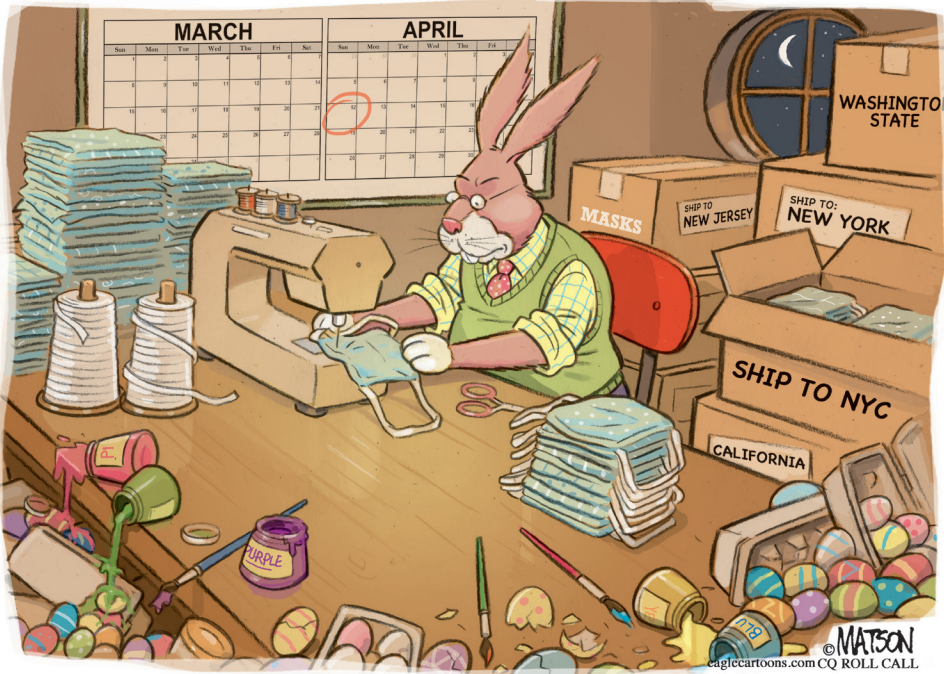
This is a shoutout to Tommy and Jeanne Smith, owners of Main Street Market in Warrenton, for their continued community spirit and giving during a time of stress and uncertainty for their fellow community businesses. They should be applauded for sponsoring the discounts for Fultano's, Arnie's Cafe and El Compadre. Well done!

DAN and ANITA DECKER
Warrenton

Just kidding

Hooray! I have it on good authority that:

- The coronavirus will disappear by Easter Sunday.
- Our economy will soon rebound dramatically.
- Racism in America will quickly abate.



And, the more respectable turkey will replace the bald eagle as our national symbol, as Ben Franklin desired in 1784.

Just kidding! It's April Fools' Day.

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park, Washington

the cross for our sins. We deserve to die for our rebellion. Yet God the son paid the price for us. Think about it.

ROBERT REGISTER
Seaside

Strange time

What a strange time to live in. It's like the world is standing still. Someone has put on the brakes to slow us down. Maybe, just maybe, we were going much too fast, and we were forgetting the most important parts of life.

Did we get caught up in the rat race? It's time to reflect on what should be No. 1. We can all agree that family and friends are way up there on the list. But what about God himself? Should he not be number one in our hearts and minds?

Yes, I know he is invisible, and it takes faith to believe in him, but evidence is all around us that he is real, and he loves us. We trust the air we breathe, but can't see it. We know gravity works. So why not God?

Could it be we are just pretty selfish, and don't want him telling us what do? You mean I can't have any fun? No, good clean fun, but not sinful ungodly stuff. That hurts God and others, even us.

The world is beautiful. Look at a butterfly, a sunset or sunrise. A baby human or animal. The ocean or clouds. There are thousands we take for granted every day, and forget who made it all for us to enjoy. The greatest gift of love was Jesus on

She cares

Do you approve of the direction our state is going? It's time for a change. There are decisions being made and laws being passed that do not serve us well.

I am a real estate agent in Tillamook County. I had the pleasure of serving on the Tillamook City Council and Tillamook Urban Renewal Agency with Suzanne Weber for about eight years. I was impressed with her knowledge, wisdom and being a "just get it done" kind of person. Our town has a renewed beauty and more business opportunities.

Suzanne has been mayor for about 10 years. I believe she is the best mayor we have ever had, and I have been here a long time. She is always available when there are needs to be met or improvements to be made.

She is a good listener, too. We need a voice in the state House of Representatives to speak loud and clear for our rural communities on the coast. She will serve her appointed districts well. When you have a problem or a need, she will be there for you.

Vote for Suzanne Weber, House District 32: She cares.

CAROLYN H. DECKER
Tillamook