

OPINION



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OUR VIEW

A virtual FisherPoets Gathering

When fishermen encounter bad weather they wait out the blow, anchored in the cove or tied up at the harbor. They are survivors — they don't take chances when Mother Nature becomes rough.

In a similar vein, there's news about the FisherPoets Gathering, one of the most sparkling events on the North Coast's calendar.

The good news is that despite the pandemic it is going ahead with a 2021 program of poetry and musical entertainment.

The not-so-good news is it will be held virtually — with the audience-tuning in online to capture the poets in action.

Before Christmas, Jon Broderick and fellow organizers had been watching for any possible signs of the pandemic safety restrictions easing. They made the correct decision to host the annual event — but revamp its format to keep everyone safe.

The gathering will begin Thursday and run Friday and Saturday with three 90-minute shows featuring about 15 poets each. There will be a 30-minute break for viewers to fix a snack in between.

There are other activities planned, all listed in Coast Weekend, or available as updates on the FisherPoets' website.

Years ago, the annual gathering was a delightful addition to the calendar of cultural and artistic events that signal how the North Coast



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Harry Moore, of Palmer, Alaska, plays guitar and sings about life as a fisherman at Astoria Brewing Co. during the FisherPoets Gathering last year.

is so vibrant and varied. With the Fort George Festival of Dark Arts, which has been canceled because of COVID risks, it added some needed sparkle to relieve the February blahs.

The FisherPoets Gathering celebrates a core part of our heritage. Although salmon runs have dwindled, and the once-bustling canneries are long gone, we're still a fishing hub. Crab pots still clutter our docksides, while nets and lines are as important now as they have been during our history. And salmon run predictions, a crab season delay or changes in gillnetting regulations are still news stories.

Broderick promises that several

dozen poets will be at the live shows on Zoom and other platforms, performing “from their kitchens and their galleys, their patios and — parked outside the public library — their front seats.”

The slate includes stalwarts of poetry and song. The Brownsmead Flats will be among those providing their singular brand of music.

And the 2021 pandemic version of the gathering will introduce some newcomers performing their work, including Bob Allen, Jan Bono, Meghan Gervais, Tony Mirosevich, Katrina Peavy and Charles Tekula. All will offer themed poetry, prose and song, which icon Dave

FISHERPOETS GATHERING

Follow the virtual events online at:
www.fisherpoets.org

Densmore once told a reporter is intended to “reinforce for the men and women of the industry a sense of pride in what we do and who we are.”

We have waxed eloquently on the authenticity of the festival every year since it started in 1998. It has grown in scale and scope to enjoy an international audience and participation, while intentionally holding tight to its small-town flavor.

Unlike the larger Elko, Nevada, cowboy poetry event, which features professional entertainers, these performers are all genuine participants in their industry. FisherPoets inhabit their folklore. Their hands, scarred from fishing line cuts, and their cheeks, reddened by gales, attest to that.

The story is told — and it may well be apocryphal — of a first-time visitor asking a seasoned audience member whether the poets were real fishermen. The long-time attendee reportedly just grinned and pointed to a performer's boots, which showed traces of fish guts that hadn't been washed off.

We'll miss that this year. People who like to “hang out in bars and listen to wild sea stories” (as event organizers tease) will be a tad disappointed that the creative fun is not in person. But this year, it must be.

UNLIKE THE LARGER ELKO, NEVADA, COWBOY POETRY EVENT, WHICH FEATURES PROFESSIONAL ENTERTAINERS, THESE PERFORMERS ARE ALL GENUINE PARTICIPANTS IN THEIR INDUSTRY. FISHERPOETS INHABIT THEIR FOLKLORE. THEIR HANDS, SCARRED FROM FISHING LINE CUTS, AND THEIR CHEEKS, REDDENED BY GALES, ATTEST TO THAT.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Water you talking about?

Having to boil drinking water in the Jeffers Gardens area was an occasional chore before Youngs River/Lewis and Clark upgraded its filtration system.

I can't remember if any boil water alert came during a power outage, but if it did, I was prepared, as I have a wood stove with the ability to boil gallons of water at any given time. What has me somewhat anxious is the reports coming out of Texas, where the public is under such an alert at the same time there is no electricity.

Millions in the Lone Star State are at risk, partly due to poor energy policy based upon “green” technology that depends on the weather. As it turns out, Texas relies on about 25% of its energy output on wind and solar power which, apparently, fizzle out during conditions like those currently happening across much of the country.

I just hope legislators in the Pacific Northwest take into account what has happened this winter in the Midwest. It seems a balanced approach to producing energy, especially during extreme weather conditions, would be the best way to ensure citizens can get a healthy drink of water during the middle of a storm.

MATT JANES
Jeffers Gardens

Above and beyond

In this day and time, the satisfaction of above-and-beyond customer service is a thing of the past. Well, unless you come in contact with Teresa Olson at the Astoria Pilot House. Let me explain.

My daughter-in-law, son and two other couples are staying at the Pilot House for my daughter-in-law's 40th birthday, and I wanted to do something extra special.

I spoke with Teresa on numerous occasions, planning a special delivery for some of her favorite goodies. Teresa was going to receive those, and set up in their suite for them on day of arrival, but Safeway did not recognize the delivery address at the Pilot House.

So Teresa volunteered for those items

to be delivered to her home address the day before, and then take them over and set up. She has done all of this over the phone, and through text messages, with a very happy voice and truly saying, “no problem.”

I have never formally met her, but hope I can, someday. I live in Georgia and so I'm over 2,500 miles away, and for a stressful making a fun surprise happen for a complete stranger, is the best great customer service I have ever received.

Thank you, Teresa and Astoria, for time well spent finding a really sweet lady.

KAREN VINSON
Ranger, Georgia

Gotta love Astoria

As an Ocean Park, Washington, resident, I love traveling 25 miles south to the thriving “metropolis” of Astoria. Its hilliness reminds me of my former residence, San Francisco.

I like the batten-down-the-hatches weather, the microbreweries, the FisherPoets, the Goonies and the plaque at 12th and Exchange streets noting Clark Gable's debut as an actor in 1922.

I love Astoria's rich history, the Column — whose 164 steps I climbed — and her sense of cragginess.

I love the hipster quality of the city, and its many fine restaurants, where I can

enjoy tasty repasts.

It's not quite the toddlin' town of Chicago, as celebrated in song by Frank Sinatra. But she does harbor some toddlin' characteristics.

Yes, Astoria looms large as a go-to place for me, as well as for Lewis and Clark, Gable and those lovable Goonies.

Yes, I love Astoria, a town where the sun shines through the pouring rain and the weather suits my clothes.

Hooray for the “big city” to the south. And thank you, business magnate John Jacob Astor.

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park, Washington

