

Continued from Page 3

industry, but I kind of enjoy that," she said.

"I don't push limits too far, but you might hear — when I talk to vessels — Siouxsie might be in the background on channel 16. I'm sure people don't know what's going on there," Steerman said. "But I think it's important to kind of mix up and diversify an industry which, for the most part, has been white men."

Steerman is the first woman dispatcher in the Columbia River Bar Pilots' history, as far as their records show.

Since the mid-19th century, the bar pilots have been guiding ships safely through the mouth of the Columbia River.

Steerman compared her job to air traffic control at an airport, tracking the ships and coordinating their entry and exit with the pilots.

In the year and a half she's worked there, Steerman has become fluent in the technology and jargon needed to direct the pilots. The screens in her office show maps of the ships in

See Page 4

RIGHT: Sam Steerman's Siouxsie and the Banshees mug sits on her desk in the Columbia River Bar Pilots dispatch office. **BELOW:** The Columbia River is reflected in Steerman's office window while she works at her desk.

PHOTOS BY LYDIA ELY/THE ASTORIAN

