

Pearson: Informal celebration at the library planned for Thursday

Continued from Page A1

Estes said the city is looking forward to having Suzanne Harold, the children's librarian, serve as interim director.

"Suzanne has been an integral part to our library over the last few years," he said.

Pearson, who retired from the U.S. Army in 2012, moved to Astoria from Colorado, where he was the senior librarian at the Denver Public Library system.

During his tenure in Astoria, Pearson led the organization of the library's basement of extensive historic archives and valuables.

He guided the library through major system upgrades and collaborated with public libraries in Seaside and Warrenton to launch the Northwest Library Cooperative, a network that shares services, including a common library card.

The library also broadened outreach with a book bike and started the 10th Street Stage, an outdoor concert series.

On Monday night, the City Council is expected to consider placing an \$8 million bond measure for the library on the November ballot.

Renovating the more than 50 year-old building has been a City Council goal for years, but plans have been scaled back or scrapped because of cost.

A poll conducted for the city in May suggests the city has a 63%

approval rating for a bond measure.

Pearson said that after years of debate over the future of the library, he is proud to leave with a 63% approval rating.

"That to me, I think, is an accomplishment," he said. "My staff and I have raised the visibility of the library within the community."

Library board members praised Pearson's leadership and contributions to the community. Pearson had also served as the chairman of the Astoria School District Board.

"He's kind to his staff and really has a knack for improving the library experience for patrons," said Dan McClure, a library board member and director of Clatsop Community College's Dora Badollet Library.

Sue Stein, another board member, called Pearson a champion for libraries.

"Jimmy Pearson is a passionate, dedicated, inspiring leader and we, as the city of Astoria and greater community, are so much better for him having found us," Stein said in an email. "While we would like him to stay longer, we are so fortunate he joined our community."

"Jimmy is a leader in education, getting materials into the hands of learners of all shapes and sizes, of making resources available to those who don't even know they need them."

An informal celebration at the library for Pearson is planned for Thursday at 5 p.m.



Danny Miller/The Astorian

Jimmy Pearson led the organization of the library's basement of extensive historic archives and valuables.

Olson: 'This region is so rich with excellent writers'

Continued from Page A1

"People are realizing that when they write poetry they have a way of conveying their thoughts and feelings in a way that can change another person or touch another person's heart," she said. "Poetry has a power that is being discovered by the masses and really anyone can write poetry. It's not an elite form — anyone can do it."

She was hesitant about her preferred style — carefully chosen rhymes and traditional cadence structures — until audience applause reinforced a wider appreciation. "I feel like a 'dinosaur poet' because I like to write poetry that rhymes and that seems to be an old-fashioned kind of thing," she said. "When you read a rhyming sonnet, like at a poetry open mic, at first I was not sure what the reaction would be, because many people are writing free-style poetry. But they loved it."

'Delicious'

Contentedness pervades her three-story home perched on the Second Street hill above the 1895 Pioneer Church where words are crafted into iambic pentameters amid views of laden vessels from exotic ports traversing the Columbia River channel.

The 1960s shaped Olson in Tacoma. "It was a wonderful childhood," she said, singing with her sister while doing the dishes and enjoying camping road trips. "Mom stayed home and grew vegetables, baked healthy whole wheat bread and taught painting classes. Dad was a firefighter. ... One of my favorite things on a nice day was to climb a lovely old tree in our yard, with a book tucked into my waistband, then spend an hour or more reading up in the branches, often with my cat, 'Boo,' on my lap.

"We were a family of readers, and that meant riding our bikes to the library once a month, each of us wearing a backpack stuffed with books to return. It was a delicious feeling each time walking into the library, confronted with the endless possibility of all the books waiting to be read."

She worked for an optometrist then became the midday host at KBKW 1450 AM in Aberdeen, playing Hank Williams, Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash. "I'm pretty sure Kurt Cobain was one of my listeners (or I like to think he might have been)," she said.

Back in Tacoma at KTAC 850 AM, she was the "traffic

girl" on the morning show, then married and needing a higher wage to feed two children, worked customer service for companies vending playground equipment firm and later bread. "During my single mom years, the poetry I wrote consisted mostly of short pieces I would compose on the fly for someone's birthday card," she said.

Olson cherishes an autographed copy of her favorite poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay. "She was an independent and unconventional poet for her time, writing about love and loss in a way that was candid and vulnerable," she said. "And she did it while maintaining a lovely, lyrical quality. Her poems are beautiful and crushing at the same time."

Fascination began early for Olson.

"I became interested in poetry around the time I was 12. I fancied myself gifted at creative writing, thanks to the encouragement I received from teachers, Mrs. Becker and Mr. Miraldi," she said.

'I LOVE IT WHEN PEOPLE TAKE A CHANCE AND MAKE THEMSELVES VULNERABLE, LETTING OTHERS FEEL AND EXPERIENCE THEIR MOST PRIVATE THOUGHTS.'

Dayle Olson

"I received a journal as a gift, and nothing would do but to fill it up with overwrought, expressive poems. Then I became friends with a very nice elderly lady who was one of my mom's painting students, Ruth Landers. She saw one of my poems, then she showed me some of her poetry, and before I knew it, I had an 80-year-old writing partner. The wonderful thing about Ruth was she talked to me like I was an equal, not a silly teenager. She wrote old-fashioned poetry of the rhyming variety, which I enjoy. In those pre-internet days, the rhyming dictionary she gave me was like gold."

Moment

Marriage followed a 10-year commuter courtship with David Olson, she in Tacoma, he in Portland, where he pined for the Bard while overseeing tedious fine print in the city's cable TV franchise contracts. They met in the middle, lured by a beef melt at the Pizza Mill in Cathlamet. "Basically, that's why we moved here: I fell in love with a sandwich," she said.

Inevitably, their 2019 wedding at the Sons of Norway lodge sparked a poem. "Anyone who was there will tell you it was the most lively, spirited wedding they ever attended. We arrived in a sky-blue Model T convertible to a parking lot full of friends and family cheering and waving Swedish and Norwegian flags (David is Swedish, I'm Norwegian). I even baked a traditional kransekake for the wedding, which was nothing but crumbs once the guests found it."

Reading "Wedding Day at Puget Island" at an Astoria workshop led by Robert Michael Pyle and Florence Sage created a Hallmark movie moment. "I started crying as I started to read my poem. Everyone gave me the space. They looked at me with complete friendship, all smiling, just waiting for me to regain my composure to be able to finish," she said.

Just then, David Olson, having completed his errands, arrived early to collect her. "I was so overcome

especially admiring the sonnet format favored by Tweedie, a retired Presbyterian minister.

"This region is so rich with excellent writers. Just being around them makes you better, if you pay attention and listen," she said.

She admits her radio experience helps "a bit" with performing. Her advice is, "Read slowly and deliberately so the weight of each word is felt and has an impact."

Jennifer Nightingale, of Astoria, author of the locally set coming-of-age novel "Alberta and the Spark," is part of her expanding fan club. "Her poetry is beautifully crafted, and movingly read," Nightingale said. "When she reads, you learn of the love she has for her family, her vibrant interest in local history, and her pride of living in her river town."

Olson treasures creative sessions in the company of writer-photographer Ruby Hansen Murray, a member of the Osage Nation who has earned significant accolades for her work, including nomination to the national Pushcart Prize.

"Dayle Olson brings a newcomer's delight to poems that detail the best of Cathlamet," said Murray, a lower Columbia resident since the 1990s who married into a Puget Island fishing family. "She writes with risk and a deep heart about relationships that moor us."

'Vulnerable'

With in-person gatherings resuming, Olson is eager to enchant more converts, using her position as first lady of Cathlamet to enhance her visibility.

In April, she asked Javier Sanchez, co-owner of River Mile 38 Brewing Co. in Cathlamet, if he and Rex Czuba would host a poetry open mic. She said Sanchez, an admirer of writer-activist Wendell Berry, enthusiastically agreed. "Some wonderful local poets showed up to read, including Jennifer Nightingale from Astoria, and John Ciminello from Naselle," she said.

One highlight was a woman, who wasn't there for the poetry, sitting at the bar with a friend. "When I encouraged anyone with a poem to come up to the mic and share, she bravely took the spotlight and read a poem which was saved on her phone," Olson said.

"That was a beautiful moment. I love it when people take a chance and make themselves vulnerable, letting others feel and experience their most private thoughts."

Intersection: Upgrades also set from Avenue A to Avenue K

Continued from Page A1

to bring funding, utility providers, ODOT and their team of professional engineers and consultants and the city of Seaside all together to improve traffic on U.S. 101," Dale McDowell, the city's public works director, said. "This is a team effort."

The intersection project will come in addition to improvements already underway from Avenue A to Avenue K, among the regional projects in design through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program from 2021 to 2024.

Construction of the \$10.7 million project is planned to start in the fall, Angela Beers-Seydel, a spokeswoman with the Oregon Department of Transportation, said.

The project is scheduled in four stages, starting with west side sidewalk construction


between Avenue A and Avenue F and east side widening between Avenue H and Avenue L. Additional construction and widening will continue, finishing with a pedestrian island between Avenue A and Avenue F.

The city has worked to make sure all the underground infrastructure has been located, replaced or prepared for the work ODOT will do, City Councilor Steve Wright said, with McDowell "at the forefront."


Wright is a board member of the Northwest Oregon Area Commission on Transportation, which works with the Department of Transportation to determine city needs and goals.

"I see my role as trying to keep these projects moving forward and to promote any other idea that will help improve the transportation options for our area," he said.





PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM UNEXPECTED AMBULANCE COSTS.



COVERS HOUSEHOLD

ONLY \$59 PER YEAR

TIME IS RUNNING OUT OFFER ENDS ON JUNE 30!

MEMBERSHIP WEBSITE TO SIGN UP:
ambulancemembership.com/medix
or call: 503-861-5554