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OPINION

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125TH ANNIVERSARY FLASHBACK

1890 | THE WEST ❖ FLORENCE TIMES ❖ THE SIUSLAW OAR ❖ THE SIUSLAW NEWS ❖ SIUSLAW NEWS | 2015

This year marks Siuslaw News' quasiquintennial, our 125th anniversary, a remarkable achievement for any business in a small community like Florence. To commemorate this milestone, throughout the year we'll feature some of the town's history as originally published in the newspaper, including historic articles and photos from more than a century ago.

Cost, size of all-events center trimmed

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After searching for more money to build the Florence all-events center (AEC), planners are now looking harder at cutting down the size and price of the proposed facility.

Joe Kerr, manager of the yet-to-built convention and performing arts center, presented a plan Monday to the Florence City Council that could leave out some of the center's equipment and reduces the size of the center.

"We need to consider this slight re-design to bring the center within the budget," Kerr told councilors. "Basically, we're stepping back a little."

Kerr and the AEC committees are stepping back to a design that architects originally considered when the plans were on the drawing board the first time. Architect Richard Turi is meeting with engineers next week to make sure the revised design comes within the

city's budget for the center.

"The changes we're proposing put us in a better position financially," Bob Read, chairman of the AEC Advisory Committee, said. "We feel very positive about this downscaling with the possibility to expand in the future."

Under the plan currently being considered, a workshop, storage space, office and performer's lounge area behind the stage all would be eliminated for now.

Last year, those areas were originally planned as future additions, but planners later added them to the building design when it was felt there was enough money to build the extra rooms.

With the current financial restraints, the rooms once again will not be built until more money is available, Kerr said.

"Those areas can easily be added later under this design," he said.

Other changes include some cuts in the mechanical and electrical systems and equip-

ment in the building. Also, many items and optional parts for the center will be bid separately, bringing down the projected costs of the basic bid to construct the building.

Kerr said the changes in the base bid take out some of the optional items for the center that drove up the project's cost when they were added into the original building design. By bidding some of the equipment separately and directly, the city will save money.

Planners ran into price problems when construction bids were opened in January and the lowest bid came out about \$800,000 over the \$2.9 million budget.

The city then looked for other funding and applied for a state grant to avoid cuts in the center. While word on whether the city will receive the state grant is not expected until May, officials decided to go ahead and plan to build the center without the grant money.

"We can't delay any longer on this project," Kerr said, adding that if the city receives

the grant money, it will be used to add back some of the additions and options officials want for the center.

While not all of the features planners desired will be bought or built into the AEC right away, Kerr assured the council that the cuts and changes will not result in an unworkable convention center.

"The convention and auditorium spaces are still the same size as before," Kerr said. "This will be a more basic, but still functional, building."

Councilors expressed support for the revised design and urged Kerr and planners to move ahead with the project.

As soon as changes to the center's design are completed, Kerr hopes to put the project out to bid sometime next month. With luck, he said, groundbreaking for the center will happen in July — one year after the ceremonial groundbreaking at the center's site on Quince Street. ❖

NEIGHBORS



Hawaiian adventure — Conclusion

BOB JACKSON
NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENT
For the Siuslaw News

It is difficult putting a cap on the flood of exciting memories of our first trip to the islands of Hawaii. A headline in a Honolulu Star Bulletin newspaper caught our eye one night, "Freighter Goes Down in Heavy Seas 1,400 mi. N.E. of Honolulu." So it looked like the rough seas we encountered on the cruise ship weren't something that was merely exaggerated in our minds.

I noted that Monday morning we were up at 5 a.m. and boarded a minibus in front of our hotel. Eight other people from nearby hotels joined us for a ride to Honolulu airport, where we had coffee, donuts and sweet rolls out on the concrete apron alongside the hangars.

Then, just like the "dawn patrol," we boarded a twin-engine Beechcraft, and soon the almost forgotten sweet sound of 450 h.p. Pratt and Whitney radials were once more exciting my ears.

Lumbering down the runway, we lifted off and ground our way over Pearl Harbor, past Waikiki beach and our hotel. Leveling off at 6,000 feet, we skirted Molokai and flew over Kahoolawe (the island of death), which is now a bombing range. We landed on the big island of Hawaii at the beautiful new Kona airport.

Built on a lava field, it was beautifully landscaped with lawns and flowers and the highway into town

was lined for miles with flowers of dazzling beauty.

We were given a sight-seeing bus trip through the Kona resort area, which was quiet, clean and beautiful. The Kona Hilton hotel looked like something out of the fictional "Shangri-La" paradise from James Hilton's 1933 novel, "Lost Horizon." Built on a cliff overlooking the sea, it had blooming plants on all the balconies (lanais). A beautiful swimming pool also overhung the iridescent, incredibly blue ocean.

Without even a short coffee stop, we, along with the other five planes in our group, took off again. Barely clearing the tree tops and dormant lava flows, we climbed the slope of Mauna Loa and circled the rim of the still smoking volcanic peak. Right down on the deck, over some of the roughest terrain imaginable, we began some of the hairiest flying I have ever experienced.

Skirting the rainstorms that completely obscured Hilo, we flew alongside perpendicular cliffs, where dozens of waterfalls made sheer drops of thousands of feet to the sea. After dipping our wings over the little church of Hana on Maui where Charles Lindbergh was buried, we landed at Kahului and boarded a bus to the Iao Valley to view the Iao needle, a spectacular jungle-covered rock spire. Then, at a big hotel, we had a fabulous buffet luncheon.

I was permitted to occupy the co-

pilot seat for the remainder of our trip, which was a very big deal for me. The cockpit on this plane was a copy of the panel on the big jets. "Stranger than fiction," this bird was used as a transition trainer for Japanese airline pilots.

We flew low over the old leper colony on Molokai, which was beautiful from the air. At 6,500 feet, we flew by Oahu again on our way to Kauai (the "garden island").

Shortly after crossing the coastline, we flew deep into the Waimea canyon, which had been called "the Grand Canyon of the Pacific." Flying close to, and below the rims of the jungle-covered walls, the air was rough and I gave a sigh of relief when we climbed out. I was especially concerned that the pilot looked younger than my teen-age grandson.

Landing at Wailua airport, we were bused to a boat ride up the Waulua river to the fern grotto and were entertained by native dancers, who also sang the hauntingly beautiful Hawaiian wedding song for us. The vegetation here was gigantic; a rhododendron-type plant, for instance, had long, trailing branches as thick as a man's arm and stretched for 100 feet in every direction. The jungle was so dense, I doubt that a man could even crawl through it!

Flying back to Honolulu, the big Boeing inter-island passenger hydrofoil was coming out of Lihue harbor on Kauai. What a spectacular sight! From 6,000 feet it looked like a two-story motel, with underwater sponsons lifting it six feet above the waves. It was going perhaps 52 mph with a slick stretching for a mile behind.

Our pilot came in over Pearl Harbor much as the Japanese did on Dec. 7, 1941, and as we were letting down he related the story of what happened on that Sunday morning not so long ago.

On our final approach to Honolulu, the world's largest military aircraft, a C5A Galaxy, came in just behind us. We were barely off our runway when it whistled past with all 36 landing wheels smoking. It was quite a sight.

We had flown 840 miles, taken five bus rides and one river boat trip — what a day!

That evening, we took a city bus to the Oceana floating oriental restaurant, the largest and most beautiful floating Chinese restaurant in the world. It had been towed over from Hong Kong.

We had dinner for two — it could not have been eaten by four people. It was without a doubt the finest dinner of its kind we had ever had anywhere

— and to top it off, we were given hot towels to wipe our fingers and faces afterward.

The memory of that luxurious suite overlooking Waikiki beach, the sea and Diamond Head will last a lifetime. The endless procession of surfboards, hydrofoils, ocean racing speedboats, sailboats, warships, canoes, catamarans and trans-pacific airliners was so exciting we had been reluctant to even sleep and thus miss even a minute of it.

Perhaps in a future date more Hawaiian stories can be covered, but for now this is "a wrap."

Over six days were spent coming to this paradise on the luxurious cruise ship Mariposa. We returned to the mainland via a giant Boeing 747 airliner, which was carrying 343 passengers (about the same as aboard the Mariposa). It took just over four hours because of a tail-wind.

Until next time.



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