

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE
For the Siuslaw News

Marianne Brisbane



Marianne Brisbane may have left her heart in San Francisco, but she rediscovered it in Florence as an “endlessly inventive” restaurateur. With previous establishments such as Spice, 1285 Restobar and Lovejoy’s Tearoom, as well as current ones like the Waterfront Depot and Le Bouchon, Brisbane has brought a minestrone of innovative menus and venues to Florence for more than 22 years.

From crab and chowder to steak and salmon, local restaurant patrons are always hungry for new culinary adventures. Instead of jumping on the common bandwagon of popular restaurant trends, Brisbane designed her own unique recipe for success, earning her the undisputed reputation as the “restaurateur extraordinaire” of Bay Street.

“People want service and ambiance, as well as quality food,” she said. “Nurturing is such an important component. It’s about the love you put into it. My heart and soul goes into my food.”

An early love of cooking as a child combined with exposure to the food of diverse cultures inspired Brisbane to become a restaurateur later in life. The self-taught culinary wizard from the Bay Area attributes her food-and-beverage prowess to a melting pot of skills honed from family mentors and service-oriented professions.

“Cooking was always my greatest

love,” she said. “I started cooking as a child with my grandmother.”

Born in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation, Brisbane grew up in East Java in the Dutch East Indies with a “creative upbringing” and a conglomeration of nationalities.

This exposure to Asian and Armenian flavors set a foundation that would later inspire her eclectic cuisine.

“We are all given a different canvas when we come into this world,” she said. “How we choose to fill it is our unique gift. For me, it was cooking.”

Her mother, a teacher and descendant of six generations of colonial Dutch, passed down her strong administrative skills to her daughter. An Armenian father, Serop Vardanian, was a prolific painter who loved to cook and instilled his creative passion in her.

Brisbane attributes her culinary success to the creative mentorship her parents brought to the table.

Her family eventually lived in The Hague until they emigrated from the Netherlands to the U.S. in 1960.

“I attended high school in three continents,” she said. “America was such a culture shock; I was looking for cowboys and Indians.”

The family settled in San Francisco, where Brisbane would spend the next three decades in various careers, slowly preparing her for a future in food service like a sauce simmering on the stove. She married young and raised two sons, working



PHOTO BY CATHERINE ROURKE

Restaurateur Marianne Brisbane believes good food is about the love that goes into it.

as a home mom for 12 years, then as a bank officer for seven years and in real estate for 17 years.

“In all those positions, I had to make people happy and fulfill their dreams,” she said. “You must have a servant’s heart to be in food service.”

Brisbane and her husband moved to Florence in 1995 after making an exploratory trip with her father, who wanted to live on the Oregon coast so he could paint “the astounding beauty.”

“I have a running love affair with Florence because it allowed me to bring my dreams to reality,” she said. “There’s a distinct warm and friendly atmosphere here and it’s about the

people and the diversity of our origins. Most of us have moved here from somewhere else and it makes you friendlier when you have to reinvent yourself.”

Brisbane and her husband had operated a tearoom in San Francisco and opened Lovejoy’s here in 1996, later enlarging upon English tea service by offering Sunday dinners. After moving the tearoom to the Pier Point Inn, they expanded it to a restaurant and British pub and then moved it back to its present location in 2004.

That same year, without any professional culinary training, she opened the Waterfront Depot after renovating the former train station and kite shop. Brisbane designed the custom-built bar and installed a chalkboard menu over the old freight door.

“I wanted to create an ambiance where people could find a safe haven from the storms of everyday life,” she said. “This included a large comfortable bar where they could enjoy a relaxed meal and engage in friendly conversation.”

More venues followed with the 12th Street Bakery and the Shed Bakery, which she later sold along with the tearoom, making way for 1285 Restobar in 2008.

Brisbane even traveled to Naples to learn the secret for creating authentic pizza. Then she opened a wine shop at The Grape Leaf, which evolved into Spice Bistro in 2012, offering a fusion of Pacific Northwest food with the flavors of her Indonesian heritage. After selling all these ventures except the Depot, she opened Le Bouchon Wine Bar &

Kitchen in 2014, serving breakfast, lunch, Happy Hour and an evening menu.

Brisbane has worked the line of her restaurants and is always present at her establishments, talking with customers and nurturing her patrons.

“My operations are a culmination of a life spent cooking and working in banking and real estate,” she said. “But the real secret of my success is happy employees. With fairness and sustainable wages, they can perform well and become part of the fabric that creates the beautiful carpet of a restaurant.”

Brisbane has added much flavor to the culinary and artistic life of Bay Street with her multifaceted restaurants, delis, provision stores and the Vardanian Gallery. Now, local oenophiles can look forward to her newest venture, the Waterfront Wine Store, which opens in April to provide breads, cheeses, wines, craft beers and ready-made lunches, with seating along the river.

“Food service is not just about delivering plates and feeding customers,” she said. “It’s about making people happy and that’s my greatest satisfaction in life.”

Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning journalist, author and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. Email CJReditor@gmail.com.

LETTERS

GOV. BROWN SHOULD RECONSIDER STANCE

I am sorry, but I do not understand or support our governor Kate Brown saying she will stand against our president, Constitution and laws of the federal government to allow illegal immigrants when we have violent incidents like Wednesday’s attack in the UK, as well as other places in Europe.

I find it hard to believe that so many people are hoodwinked into believing that portions of our news is not anti-Trump and pro-Muslim propaganda.

I have to wonder why Kate Brown supports having illegal immigrants in our state. I don’t know what to say to her other than opposing her agenda for us. I need a common ground. I presented it the recent Town Hall meeting at the firehouse and I don’t know how else to ask her to please reconsider her stance.

*Guthrie Wilson
Florence*

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

The other day I called the Memory Loss Respite Center of Florence and got its answering machine. In their message they said the words “adult day care,” and a memory I had completely forgotten about came rushing back.

Decades ago when I first graduated from college as an elementary school teacher, I found myself with a summer where I did not have to work to make ends meet. Not wanting to be idle, I decided to volunteer in my community. I took my German Shepard and my fuzzy gray cat through a training program to become service animals.

Upon their graduation, once a week on Wednesdays, I took my dog and cat to the local Adult Day Care Center.

I remember how much the participants enjoyed petting and holding my pets, and how they loved to share stories about the pets they had growing up.

Being a young 20-something, I of course knew what Dementia and Alzheimer’s meant,

but I didn’t comprehend the devastation those afflictions have on the elderly and their families. Nor did I realize how much their caregivers appreciated having the Adult Day Care Center and volunteers like me to provide them some highly needed respite from caregiving.

Now, I’m on the receiving end of this circle. I take my mother to the Memory Loss Respite Center (located in the Florence Senior Center) three times a week. I don’t know where she or I would be without this service.

But soon, due to a shortage of volunteers, my mother will only be able to attend her “coffee club” twice a week. I don’t know if she’ll retain the cognitive gains she’s made since starting this program. I hope she does. I also hope that two days a week is enough to slow the progression of her Alzheimer’s and keep her from disappearing completely.

If anyone finds themselves with some idle time, I hope they’ll consider volunteering with this program and continuing good karma in our community.

It seems it’s true that what goes around, comes around.

*Juels Larson
Florence*

BACKPACK 4 KIDS

The Mapleton and Siuslaw School Districts would like to thank the tireless volunteers at Food Backpack 4 Kids with regards to their efforts to deal with childhood hunger in our communities.

Each week, more than 100 students in the Mapleton and Siuslaw school regions receive a take-home bag with the food they need at home for the weekend. Many students in our districts eat most of their meals at school during the week. These supplemental weekend food donations keep some students fed until they come back to school the next week.

The snack bags are a great way to support our struggling families by providing weekend snacks for their children.

This charitable act is truly from the heart. The efforts of a small army of volunteers are coordi-

nated by Marilyn Barba, with Pastor Dale Edwards, through the Cross Road Assembly of God in Florence.

Every penny of every donation goes directly to feeding needy children in our area. There is no overhead for operational services or labor and all funds go into purchasing supplies for a child’s weekend nutrition.

The impact of this effort is profound and a true grassroots solution to a genuine — and oftentimes unseen — problem in our communities.

For more information on the program, visit www.backpackimpact.com to donate or volunteer.

Once again, thank you to all the volunteers and contributors to the Food Backpack 4 Kids program from the Mapleton and Siuslaw School Districts.

Your efforts make a difference every weekend to a child in need in our communities.

*Jodi O’Mara,
Superintendent
Mapleton School District
Andy Grzeskowiak,
Superintendent
Siuslaw School District*

WE WILL BE WATCHING

Congressman Walden (R-OR), you represent all Oregonians in your position as chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

You also played a key role as an architect of the health care repeal bill. I am very concerned that this bill will seriously impact my adult daughter who has an intellectual disability and relies entirely on Medicaid for her very existence.

This bill will also impact many Oregonians receiving Medicare, including myself and my wife. We demand you not vote for this bill. We will be watching the outcome of this vote very carefully.

If it passes, there will be many angry Oregonians.

*Michael Allen
Florence*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous, argumentative and anonymous letters or poetry will not be published.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large. The newspaper does not publish partisan letters that promote or endorse local political candidates based solely on their record, reputation and qualifications; this constitutes paid political advertising.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes. This also constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any such letter.

The newspaper is particularly sensitive to organized “letter-writing campaigns.” The newspaper reserves the right to reject any such letter.

Write to: editor@thesiuslawnews.com

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