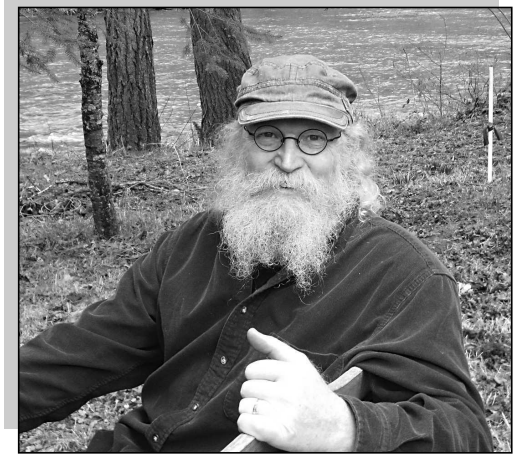


## VIEW FROM UPRIVER

# What wonderful country

WESLEY VOTH  
For the Siuslaw News



This is another report from the road as we travel in our camper van to the Gulf, the East Coast and back. I've been reading newspapers along the way; some of my favorites to date:

The Navajo-Hopi Observer in Arizona; Las Cruces Sun-News in New Mexico; El Paso Times, The Llano News (Deer Capital of Texas, with its multiple statues of bucks decorated like Florence's sea lions), Wharton Journal Spectator, the Bay City Sentinel in Texas, and The New Iberian in Louisiana.

In all of them, local issues resound passionately about things like potholes and infrastructure, schools and sports teams, city and state government. And when the federal government is mentioned, it is in relation to a local issue, like "Feds Limit Red Snapper Season" (Bay City) or that Trump administration rules

have lowered the number of legal crossings between El Paso and its sister city Juarez on the Mexican side of the line.

In none of these papers I've seen has there been the breadth of issues or balance as there has been in the letters to the editor in the newspaper you are reading at the moment.

How does a government keep people from breaking its laws? One state uses the following strategy with its speed laws: make the speed limit the same for all vehicles; set the limit really high, like 80 mph on freeways, and where there's signals and crossroads, lower this to 75; and don't spend enough on road maintenance for anyone to actually be able to go that speed.

Problem solved (Texas).

One more thing about Texas: If there were as many "lone" stars in any smaller state, they would be spilling out its borders.

We have mostly been avoiding the large roads and following the small, winding, less direct routes, and now along the Gulf Coast where I have never been before. There is such a variety of words used to describe what we span with bridges, many of them regional:

river, creek, draw, gulley, wash, arroyo, canyon, branch, gulch, hollow and — where I am now — bayou, canal, ditch, causeway, levee and waterway.

We have gone through the land of roadrunners and sagebrush, prickly pear and alligator juniper, where the roadkill is deer and jackrabbits and snakes. We've also seen country of scissor-tailed flycatchers and black vultures, where what is dead on the road is wild pigs and ring-tailed cat; where there is mesquite and every roadside flower is a colorful variation on sunflower or daisy.

And now we're in the land of cypress, palmetto and Spanish moss, where the roadkill is armadillo and turtles; and the large animal about to cross in front of us turns out to be an alligator with a head the size of a horse.

What looks like our familiar cranberry bogs are crawfish farms.

The Gulf Coast surprises me with its shallow warm water and fine sand, people driving on the beaches, and vast coastal estuaries, all of it teaming with a profusion of life.

Storks, cranes, rails, ibises and spoonbills, brown pelicans in breeding plumage, and the well named laughing gulls with their black heads. The water swirls with fish, shrimp, crabs, turtles and alligators. We have seen literally thousands of people over the last week

engaged in some form of procuring food from this bounty. People of every age, ethnic background and economic or social class, from every conceivable type of floating conveyance to sitting or standing or wading along some form of edge, using poles and bait and nets of infinite variety.

The result is for sale everywhere, and we buy from memorable people selling it straight and plain to cook ourselves, and now in restaurants in New Orleans — a different memorable experience.

We have seen plenty of evidence of both Hurricane Katrina (2005, \$108 Billion) and the British Petroleum oil spill disaster (2010, BP has paid out more than \$40 billion to date).

There are new schools built of brick and concrete and elevated on stilts, a lot of recent housing construction on stilts like some of the houses in Mapleton, and some services still in what look like FEMA trailers, including a post office in Cameron Parish that looks much like (what can I say?) the post office in our own Deadwood, Ore.

Except it's raised way up on blocks.

We have sure met a lot of kind, friendly and abundantly helpful people along our way.

And we've seen beautiful, interesting country.

## 'Fresh Impressions' winners announced

The Gallery Committee, as part of the non-profit Friends of the Florence Event Center (FEC), recently put on an Artist Reception for the students who participated in the high school art exhibit, "Fresh Impressions."

Financial awards were given by the Friends of the FEC for first, second and third place, and City Lights Cinema donated movie tickets to all honorable mention award winners. 2-D artwork was matted by Frames of Florence.

Award winners are as follows: First place for 2-D art went to Ben Cahoon for his scratchboard "Beauty of the Abyss"; 3-D first place went to Maci Wells for her Monet inspired Teapot.



COURTESY PHOTO

Friends of the FEC and artists recently attended a reception for winners of the "Fresh Impressions" show. From L, Jo Beaudreau, Ben Cahoon, Caesar Castillo, Jane Connelley, John Leasure, Patti Williams, Claudia Ignatieff, and Liz Johnson.

second place went to Elissa Hurley for her scratchboard "Friendly Fox; third place went to Hanna Anderson for her mixed media "Little Red Riding Hood."

Four Honorable Mention awards were given to: Kaitlin Snook, "It's Been a Really Weird Week; Caesar Castillo for "Moonlit Lake"; Abby Watkins for "Snap Trap Turtle Teapot"; and Ethan Hack for "King."

This exhibit will be at the FEC through the month of May, and it is of exceptional quality.

Special thanks go to Siuslaw High School art instructor Kim Pickell for assisting with this exhibit.

## Piano Chameleons to tickle ivories at FEC



Pianists Matt Herskowitz (left) and John Roney will perform at the Florence Events Center May 24.

Two grand pianos facing each other while classical music and jazz merge in a burst of virtuosity — it's a night to remember, and a night that SEACoast Entertainment will bring The Piano Chameleons to the FEC on May 24 at 7 p.m.

The stage will come alive with two grand pianos as pianists Matt Herskowitz and John Roney perform as one.

Undisputed masters of improvisation, these two virtuosos take pleasure in revisiting jazz standards and great classic pieces to create new musical

A versatile pianist by nature, Herskowitz brings a unique perspective to every single style he plays. The virtuoso has played in various festivals and concerts across the world.

Among other things, Herskowitz has played at Carnegie Hall, the International Jazz Festival in Montreal and many European festivals.

Throughout his career, Herskowitz has been playing with a wide variety of artists including: Andrea Griminelli, Lara St. John, David Gotay, Coral Egan, Charles Pappasoff and many others.

Jazzlab, to name only a few. Roney's versatility as a performer, composer and even as an arrangement artist granted

him access to the best places in the world of music.

Tickets are \$32 for adults or \$10 for ages 18 and under.

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**JAZZKINGS**  
**MY LUCKY STAR**  
Saturday, May 20, 2 pm matinee  
Florence Events Center 541.997.1994  
Free Jazz tickets for Students program

**\$500 REWARD FOR SAFE RETURN.**

Blonde long-haired dachshund, white on face. She's deaf and usually responds to clapping hands. She has on a red collar with ID tag. We live on Davis Way just off Clear Lake Rd. in Dunes City. Missing since Fri., 2/10. If you find her please call 541-997-3134(hm) or 541-999-5885(cell).

**MOLLY is Missing**

**The Florence Organic Farmers' Market will start its 21st season on May 20 and continuing through October 28.**

The market is open SATURDAYS, 10am – 2pm at 310 Highway 101 (Pro Lumber)

The market accepts WIC and Farm Direct Nutrition vouchers.

For more information, call Maria at 541-902-8815.

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**FREE Spring into Gardening**  
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Thursday, May 18, 2-3pm  
1451 Spruce Street, Florence

Learn how to start a vegetable or flower garden with plants and seed! Dan Garbe, nursery manager from Laurel Bay Gardens will talk about soil preparation and tips for successful gardening in raised beds.

Enter to win a \$50 gift card to Laurel Bay Gardens

RSVP (early limited seating) to Belinda 541.997.8202 or bshores@shorewoodsl.com

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