



Senior Moments

with Emma Edwards

Freedom from isolation

As with many of us these days, I have not ventured out much. So, after a few weeks, I decided to “take off” for a little drive.

However, my car did not start after being neglected for so long.

My grandson, Adam, has what I call a magic little black box that started my car within minutes of hooking it up to the battery.

He said that I should drive the car around for 25 minutes to adequately charge the battery. So I put my latex-free gloves on my two hands and my favorite pink mask on, locked my doors and left my home.

It was fun just driving around with no place to go. I felt like a bird let out of its cage!

That got me to thinking. Wouldn't it be fun to have a machine we could hook up to ourselves and return to “normal” life! I mean before our current COVID-19 crisis moved upon us?

In last week's Columbia Press, Kelly Knudsen's Off the Shelf column acted as that little machine in my life.

Shame on me! I didn't even know there was a drive-through window at the library. Being an avid reader, as well as a writer, I should have known about that.

Silly me, I had already ordered a Debbie McComber

book from Amazon when I could have borrowed it for free at my local library!

Also in her column, I learned that April is National Poetry Month as well as this week being National Library week.

Kind of gave me a chuckle realizing maybe that was why my little sister (a poet who lives in Michigan and is 83 years old) sent me two poems a few days ago. She had read them to me on the phone and then I asked her to send them to me.

I researched and learned that we needn't worry about viruses or bacteria on a book's surface. If we're concerned, we can clean the cover with a microfiber cloth. We can use disinfectant wipes on plastic book covers.

Maybe it's time to use my library card with the amazing picture of the Iredale shipwreck (showing more of it than one can see now)?

In her Off the Shelf column, Kelly spoke of “the power of poetry more than ever during these unusual circumstances we are living in, as poetry and inspiring language can help bring solace and needed strength.”

I will send sister Elizabeth's poem over to Cindy Yingst, publisher/editor of the paper, in case she has room for it sometime. I'm sure it will bless you as it did me.

Special columns in The Columbia Press

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Mayor's Message

by Henry Balensifer III



Disappointing news for many small businesses

I'm not going to sugar coat it -- the federal Small Business Administration programs had great intentions and were a rather large failure in execution.

They rushed the aid and, in doing so, provided ever-changing criteria and then didn't means-test it -- so, in the end, tons of true small businesses got left with shattered hopes of relief, while chains that exploited a loophole on the 500-employee threshold got millions.

It's not that chains are any less valuable as employers, but, unlike franchises that are owned by individuals who write their paychecks directly, national chains hardly qualify as small businesses.

As I write this, many Clatsop County businesses were able to get SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan funds, but the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) as I'm aware of it did not get disbursed to very many local businesses.

Stories in the news, in which big banks had prioritized the largest SBA loans to the largest companies, leave everyone on the coast discouraged.

It infuriates me to read stories of well off entities like Harvard (whose current endowment is in the billions) getting PPP funding, but small businesses in Clatsop County getting a “we're out of funds” message, or a crashed online portal that prevented access.

I've registered my fury to our congressional delegation, and I hope everyone else has let their representa-

tives know as well. Smaller community banks and credit unions seem to have a better batting average right now in serving their smaller, local customers.

I apologize for those who grasped at the hope of getting funds but found they were unable to receive them.

While I'm not responsible for the functionality or disbursement of the funds, I am trying to let people know of programs as soon as I'm aware of them to give whatever fighting chance there is. Don't stop trying.

I think the most pointed frustration everyone has is with the state's unemployment system.

If you're self-employed, but ineligible for state unemployment, you still are eligible for the \$600 per week from the federal government -- regardless if you're ineligible for state unemployment. In conversations with our congressional delegation asking why people cannot get it, the response has been they are waiting for the state of Oregon.

It's well known that the state's capabilities and actions related to unemployment probably have been the biggest failure universally. CEDR has advised self-employed individuals to keep applying for unemployment even if the state system says you're ineligible.

You still have rights to those funds whenever the state figures out how to include federal disbursements to state-ineligible self-employed individuals.

It seems that about half of unemployed Warrenton residents eligible for both state and federal benefits are getting something, and the other half haven't seen a check yet.

Keep fighting and applying. I can't say when those funds will come, but they eventually will.

I am working with Commissioner Mark Baldwin on a resolution to more officially increase the heat on the state related to their unemployment failures.

This includes putting their unemployment staff on 24/7 shifts instead of cramming everyone into the 8-5 schedule. It's a crisis of epic proportions and state agencies need to stop treating it as if it were a ramp up of business as usual.

Keep in touch through my Mayor Henry Balensifer Facebook page; I try to remain as responsive as possible and issue updates as I have information. My philosophy of communication is guided by three points: What do I know, who needs to know, and have I told them yet? This is why I don't schedule regular updates -- a lot of info can be time sensitive and I want to ensure its gets out in a timely manner.

Stay healthy and stay kind to each other. We all live together and will continue to need each other as we emerge from this crisis.

