

# A no-name house in a quaint village

Somehow, we must accommodate our visitors without destroying the very thing that attracts them here.

My beach house doesn't have a name.

Unlike some homes in Cannon Beach, Seaside, Gearhart and other parts of the North Coast, it isn't known as "White Sands," or "Ocean Vista" or even "Puffins Perch."

And, unlike those houses, which are all listed with either Airbnb or VRBO (Vacation Rentals By Owner), my house isn't for rent, either. Not by the night, the week nor the month.

When I spent five weeks this summer in John Day, my friend, Deborah, from Bremerton, Wash., stayed at my house. She invited her own friends to visit. They had a great time.

She would send emails describing their adventures. A couple of times they drove to a marina south of Wheeler where they bought freshly caught and cooked crab and enjoyed a picnic lunch in the sun. Sometimes — before the local fire ban went into effect — they built a bonfire on the beach. They visited Cannon Beach's farmers market. They shopped in Manzanita and traveled to Astoria.

In one email, Deborah, who apparently was getting tired of local streets clogged with summer's usual array of cars and visitors, wrote to me, "Now I know why you enjoy the quiet months."

At the end of her visit, she sent me another email, thanking me for letting her stay in Cannon Beach for a month. Her friends enjoyed their stay, too, and several wanted to return.

"If you ever wanted to, I know you could rent your house out," Deborah added.

It was something I had never thought about, and, frankly, never want to do. I suppose I could name my house a "Forest Fantasy" and market it as being in a quiet neighborhood three blocks from Haystack Rock in the quaint village of Cannon Beach.

There are a lot of people on the North Coast who have given plenty of thought to the idea of renting out their houses to perfect (and, as it turns out, not so perfect) strangers for hundreds of dollars a night and thousands of dollars a month.

According to its website, VRBO has at least 1,359 vacation rentals on the North Coast from Neskowin to Astoria. Of those, Cannon Beach has 148; Seaside, 238; Gearhart, 82; and Astoria, 13.

The practice of renting out a house in a small town like Cannon Beach or Gearhart has proven so popular that permanent residents who live next to these houses are starting to complain.

In Gearhart, where the City Council has spent nearly two years developing an ordinance to regulate vacation rentals, the problem has pretty much gotten out of control, according to residents who must listen to the loud parties, watch the untended garbage fly out of the cans and maneuver around the numerous parked cars overflowing the streets.

Cannon Beach has strict ordinances regarding rentals, but with so many visitors in town and so many local homes being advertised on the websites, it's questionable as to whether the ordinances — especially the one restricting rentals to one reservation every 14 days on homes that aren't in the city's rental "lottery" — are being enforced.

With the popularity of vacation rentals — some allow as many as 10 people per house — come the visitors. Of course, that means opportunities for local businesses, and that's good for shops that have struggled during the slow winter months. But, sometimes, there's too much of a good thing.

One Cannon Beach business owner, who has run a popular operation for at least a decade, told me they had to cut back this summer. It wasn't because of a lack of demand; it was because they couldn't find enough employees.

It's a story I've heard many times up and down the North Coast. Finding enough staff to work the hours it takes to serve the number of customers coming into a restaurant, a store or any other establishment in this area is a challenge for most any business owner.

Why aren't there enough people to be hired? Because, in a vacation wonderland, where (VRBO) rentals average \$263 a night in Cannon Beach, \$216 in Seaside and \$257 in Gearhart, there is little housing left that people who earn an average hourly wage, or even slightly higher, can afford.

Homeowners who rent out their houses as vacation rentals say they can't afford to keep their properties without the ability to offer them up to visitors. The incentive of earning money from a house also requires owners or rental managers to maintain the house, and this reduces the number of neglected properties in a community.

But the problems are occurring far more often with the increasing

## IMPRESSIONS



By NANCY MCCARTHY

**Pretty soon the very thing that attracts visitors may disappear forever.**

number of vacation rental homes on the market. I don't know what the solution is; I only know there needs to be some way to balance the need for visitors with the needs of the permanent residents, employees and businesses in our communities.

Without that balance, pretty soon the very thing that attracts those visitors — our "quaint villages" with the quiet beaches cited so often on these vacation rental sites — may disappear forever.

*Nancy McCarthy is the retired editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.*

## LETTERS

Letters from Page 4A

our food, attending to our needs during the ceremony and cleanup. They performed magnificently and above the call of duty.

We served over 200 dinners; got the tables, chairs and the Seaside High School cafeterium in good shape Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 26 and 27. The night was a complete success. Thanks to Gearhart Market leaders and crew.

The Induction Committee would also like to thank Nike. Mike Burk, Julie Nelson and their crew led the clean up department after the Seaside High School Hall of Fame induction event. During the ceremony they walked around and made sure that guests had coffee, water, etc. and worked well with Gearhart Market.

They always had a smile on their face, asked questions about what they could do next and because of their tremendous help, we were able to get out of there before 9 p.m.

Mike and Julie have done a tremendous job of teaching and coaching those young people to perform the way they did. Without them there, it would not have been the successful night that it was.

The Seaside Hall of Fame has inducted 127 individuals and 28 teams since it was started in 2001.

**Stubby Lyons  
Seaside**

**Water problems are not limited to Cannon Beach**

This letter address the two-part article "Water Rating Indicate Infrastructure Problem" by Dani Palmer that ran Sept. 29 and 30.

We are all concerned about insuring the best water quality possible in our streams and on our beaches. The Surfrider spot testing for pollution in our streams and beaches may be misleading. The City of Cannon Beach was incorporated in 1957 to build a sanitary sewerage system to replace existing septic tanks and drain fields in use. Fortunately there were no combined sewers that conveyed both storm water and wastewater in the city that sometimes led to continued stream pollution in cities like Astoria and Portland.

The original 1958 system and additions in the north end of Cannon Beach and Tolovana Park were planned, constructed and inspected in accordance with Department of Environmental Quality standards. The city was one of the first to use rubber gas-

ket couplers throughout their system. Sewer lines were inspected during construction and tested to insure proper construction. All sewers were also water tested for exfiltration by filling the pipes to a point above the groundwater table and measuring any loss in water. All sewers constructed passed these tests.

The city regularly inspects, maintains and improves our sewer system. This is done by cleaning, visual inspection, TV cameras, infiltration detection, dye testing, etc. Having served on the Public Works committee, I know that the city continues to look for better detection methods and maintains long-term records.

A long-term data collection and study is needed. This is not just a Cannon Beach problem, but occurs throughout the Oregon

coast. The City of Cannon Beach and all of us should work with Surfrider to have the Department of Environmental Services recognize the statewide coastal problem and how best to identify the real culprits. Dan Grassick, our Public Works director has used some state-of-the-art and innovative technology to investigate stream flows for human con-

tamination and would be an asset for future studies.

**Les Wierson  
Cannon Beach**

### Correction

Information in a letter in the Gazette, Sept. 25, on spruce tree pruning should have been attributed to a submission on HubPages. The corrected letter from Diane Amos and Elizabeth Lorish is included this week.

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