

Views from the Rock

Claudia Toutain-Dorbec, a tourist ambassador to the world

An artist of intensity, Claudia Toutain-Dorbec has dedicated her life to sharing her artistic vision with others, through hospitality and community involvement in the arts. As the owner of the Cannon Beach Hotel, the city's longest-running lodging facility, she sees her city of Cannon Beach as a canvas for her dreams, and the dreams of others.

There is history within the walls of the Cannon Beach Hotel. At 113 years young, the one-time Becker Building is the city's longest continuously operating lodging facility.

Toutain-Dorbec bought the hotel with her then-husband and business partner, Stephen Tuckman, from a former nurse who had turned it into the first bed and breakfast in Cannon Beach.

Toutain-Dorbec presided over the hotel's centennial celebration in 2004, and is now the proprietress of the hotel and cafe, the Courtyard, the McBee Cottages and Hearthstone Inn.

"There's one phrase I use for the hospitality business: 'It's a daunting job,'" Toutain-Dorbec said. "It's a tough business. You work Christmas, you work Thanksgiving — you pretty much devote your life to the business. It's like having dozens of plates spinning in the air, when you see one is starting to topple a little bit, you've got to run over there and catch it.

"We have a maxim we live by over at the front desk," she added. "It's called, 'Do it now.'"

After Tuckman's death, Claudia married the renowned war correspondent Pierre Toutain-Dorbec. "Fragile and tired," after retirement, he sought a quieter life.

The battlefield veteran now enjoys days very different from the 35 years he spent as a photojournalist for some of the most prestigious international publications of the 20th century in locations ranging from Tibet, Nepal and China to Paris, Quebec and Los Angeles.

Two of these books he co-authored with His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama.

The Toutain-Dorbecs break up their "daunting job" as hoteliers with at least six weeks of vacation every fall, often to their home in France.

Season in the garden

In 2011, Claudia Toutain-Dorbec, a painter, had the experience of a lifetime when invited artist-in-residence at the Monet Gardens in Giverny, in Normandy, France.

"An invitation from the Foundation Claude Monet in 2009, based on my American Southwest botanical work, to spend one week per month there for five months in 2010, with a private studio, could not be refused," she wrote in the subsequent book chronicling the experience, "A Season at Monet's Garden."

Monet's aesthetic jibed with her own sensibilities. "He was a genius, a fabulous artist, a foodie, an incredible gardener," she said.

Toutain-Dorbec was intrigued with Monet's love of Japanese art and landscape design. But she faced a considerable challenge when she began her residency.

"When I arrived at Monet's Garden, I was told I could not cut a flower," she said. "I almost got on a plane and flew back. I dug under Dumpsters, I climbed on the ground for flowers, I bribed a gardener with expensive shears. We arrived one day and found gardeners digging up all the tulips which they would not let me touch and which they were replacing with geraniums, fallen in a storm."

But she found enough assistance from gardeners and staff to complete her project. The book debuted at the New York Botanical Gallery in 2011 and celebrated its Oregon opening at the Cannon Beach Art Association Gallery in 2014.

Photos from her season in Giverny are on display at the Seaside Library through April 25.

International destination

In 2015, the Toutain-Dorbecs broke up their annual travels with a trip to Italy and last fall to India.

The exotic and varied international background of the couple — along with the natural beauty of the North Coast — both invites and successfully attracts an international clientele to Cannon Beach.

"We do get quite a number of French people," Toutain-Dorbec said. "I've noticed a serious uptick in international travelers. It's been pretty much the case along the



R.J. MARX PHOTO/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Claudia Toutain-Dorbec in front of the Cannon Beach Hotel.

north Oregon coast. They really enjoy Cannon Beach. It's got those designations 'most beautiful beaches.' It's been named among the 'most beautiful places' by National Geographic. That really got their attention."

The city's growth as a welcoming place for the arts adds to the appeal.

A couple from Berlin, here for their third year, "loves the Coaster Theatre," Toutain-Dorbec said — and that brings us to another one of her endeavors, as a commissioner for the city's Tourism and Arts Commission.

Funds for the arts

The commission provides funds from the city's hotel tax dollars to encourage tourism in the off-season, with programs like the Cannon Beach Juried Art Show, the yoga festival, Savor Cannon Beach and the Spring Unveiling Arts Festival, among others.

Events like these are "critical to our community," Toutain-Dorbec said. "I'm hopeful that every hotel owner in this town feels that way. Because that's part of what makes this community so vibrant and alive and brings people in every year. People from the cottage tour, they come from all over the country. We have wonderful authors that come to 'Get Lit at the Beach.'"

Seven commissioners from diverse industries in Cannon Beach distribute the funds, with the goal of putting "heads in beds."

"We're looking to bring people here to stay in town for a couple of days and provide them with an activity that helps them to get to know Cannon Beach as a community, our culture, our environment, our beautiful flora, our fauna, Haystack Rock, Ecola Park," she said. "Last year we had \$285,000 to give away. It's not peanuts."

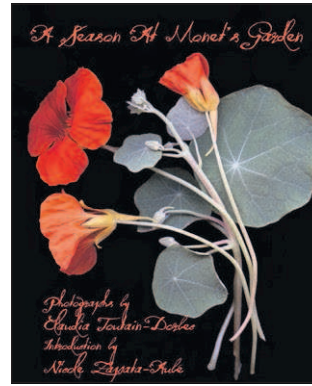
Arts organizations partner with county nonprofits to create an event that brings people to the community, "and we bring them the funding to make that happen."

Any promotion or event contributing to the arts or that would bring in tourists from more than 50 miles away would receive consideration. Tourism and art fund grants can be used for expenses like personnel, special events, signs, promotional materials and advertising.

The commission is "always looking for events to bring guests to our community, and we're always looking for new projects," Toutain-Dorbec said.

What a great way to follow your bliss in Cannon Beach!

For those interested in exploring Tourism and Arts Commission opportunities, contact City Recorder Colleen Riggs at 503-436-8052; riggs@ci.cannon-beach.or.us.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

"A Season in Monet's Garden," by Claudia Toutain-Dorbec. Drawings from the book are on display at the Seaside Library.

LETTERS

The kindness of strangers

Thank you Astoria, Seaside and Cannon Beach. I am not a resident of the area, but absolutely adore it, and it means more to me than you know. I'll explain.

I have been coming to the area for some time, five years ago, to be exact, since I first discovered it. I adore it, and come as often as I can, it's truly special. In fact I've been here for the last few days. A little over a year ago my mother and father died, 13 days apart, and it ripped me to pieces.

They loved the ocean, my mother especially. The last ocean they laid their eyes on was at Seaside at sunset. I can't imagine a better end. Since then, the area has been a refuge, something good, and a feeling of some sort of familiarity of my parents to hurt, rejoice and connection. When I'm there it's like they're not gone, like I'm not gone.

Not long after they died, my dog (her dog as well) fell ill with cancer. She's getting treatment, but will pass away. She is the last living link to her I have, to something special just between us. She's always gone with me, and she will continue to until she can't — she shares the love of the area with me. She means so much. We are the best of friends, she's all I have. I will continue time to give her the best life possible.

Something happened Sunday. Along Cannon Beach, adjacent to Haystack Rock, my dog and I stopped to watch the sun go down. Those sunsets are the most beautiful; Sunday was the most beautiful.

Now I know the people of the area are wonderful. I've interacted with them for years, and they've been kind to my parents and pooch, and myself. As I was leaving, a woman approached me and said she was a photographer. She said she had a picture for me, and normally doesn't approach subjects, but felt I needed a picture she had taken of us.

When I saw it, I didn't know what to say, but cry. First it made me happy, sad she was going to die, sad for my parents gone, but joyous in its connection, it's love, hope, and something we all share that can't ever die. All because a resident I didn't know — a stranger's kindness, a common thread of all residents — who knew enough to know what it meant, and that I needed it.

I know the area is special, and has given me, us, so much, and brought it all together yesterday. I'd like the communities to know that.

Michael Quatrociocchi
La Grande



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Michael Quatrociocchi and his dog in Cannon Beach.

Nonprofits may apply for funding

Nonprofit organizations providing programs/projects in arts, educational, recreational, environmental, community or social services in Cannon Beach are invited to apply for funding from the City of Cannon Beach by filing an application with:

City of Cannon Beach, Parks and Community Services Committee, P.O. Box 368, Cannon Beach, OR 97110; Attention: Jennifer Barrett.

Applications must be submitted by 2 p.m., Wednesday, April 19.

Applications are available at Cannon Beach City Hall, 163 East Gower Street, P.O. Box 368, Cannon Beach, OR 97110, or electronically at www.ci.cannon-beach.or.us.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday, March 14
Cannon Beach City Council,
5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1810 S. Franklin, Seaside.

Thursday, March 16
Cannon Beach Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., 163 E. Gower St.

Thursday, March 23
Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Cannon Beach Design Review Board, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Friday, March 24
Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, March 21
Cannon Beach Public Works

Cannon Beach Library to celebrate its 90th birthday

Library friends, you may not be aware that this is a very significant year for us. 2017 is our 90th birthday, which we will be officially celebrating at our October membership meeting.

Our Cannon Beach Library was organized by eight women in 1927. The state librarian sent 54 books as part of the Oregon traveling library program to help start the library. The first year consisted of books on three shelves in the small store La Rose Shop — and the rest is history, as they say. We will be focusing on various aspects of our history in columns to come.

Our Northwest Author Series is scheduled for Saturday, March 11, at

AT THE LIBRARY

CARLA O'REILLY



2 p.m. when author Ellen Urbani will be meeting with us to discuss her book "Landfall." Because our author events have been very well-attended in recent months, you should arrive well before 2 in order to assure getting a seat. If you have any questions about Ellen Urbani or her writings, please contact Jean Furchner at 503-440-9767.

Cannon Beach Reads, our library book-reading group, will be con-

vening on Wednesday, March 15, at 7 p.m. This month, the group will have read, and will be discussing "Our Souls at Night," by author Kent Haruf. Linda Gebhart will be this month's discussion leader.

You don't want to miss Saturday, March 25, at 3 p.m. when folk singer and puppeteer Andy Furgeson from Red Yam Productions will be performing "The Deep Woods" for our children's spring break program. Sure to be fun for all ages!

We are excited to announce Cannon Beach Library has begun hosting two new programs. Storytime Hour held every Friday from 11 a.m. to noon for infant to preschool age children. This was started by Nadia

Gardner from North Coast Parents Network. Also the new Cannon Beach ESL program. This was started by Nancy Wesson, with help from Judith Pearson, as well as others. The classes are held on Tuesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. Both endeavors have proved to be very successful and enjoyable for all participants, including library personnel! All are welcome. Come check us out!

Finally, put April 5 from 11 to 1 p.m. on your calendars and come share the Member and Volunteer Luncheon with us. The event will be presented at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce at 207 North Spruce St. Save the date!

In other library news, the library

board has voted to create a special library poetry section, containing books donated by long-time library supporter Joe Hummel, among other poetry selections. This should be accomplished soon. Watch for it!

We have an ongoing book sale in our special book sale room at the library. Cookbooks, gardening books, and children's books are available, as well as other choices, both fiction and nonfiction. Library patrons who enter our doors to sit by the fire and escape the storms outside are cordially invited to check out the books we have available!

Lastly, let's all cheer up and look forward to a lovely Pacific springtime — it must be coming, right!?

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