

A visit with the Chief

Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn is a model of community law enforcement. A former Seaside police officer, Schermerhorn was selected as Cannon Beach chief in 2012 out of a field of 40 candidates. His involvement with citizens and the community — be it as emergency preparedness leader, volunteer firefighter, Rotary member, participant in “Shop with a Cop” and “National Night Out” or mentor for youth, he is visible, vocal and available for residents as a go-to for those in need.

His latest role is an interim one, filling in for former City Manager Brant Kucera, who left to take a similar job in the city of Sisters. We caught up with Schermerhorn at his office at police headquarters.

Q: So much is going on with you in this dual role of police chief and city manager. Is it doable?

A: It is doable. The great thing with Cannon Beach is that we have great employees. In the last three weeks, there have been times when each of the department heads have been gone and their crews just pick up after them and do what they need to do.

Of course I am biased, but it is great for me to step away from the police department and have everything still going smoothly here. Everybody down the line does a great job.

Q: What are the big issues you are addressing?

A: As city manager, we have a new building official. The charter school is the big thing now. We are working with the academy on building permits. There are a lot of things that keep popping up. They’re on a time crunch to get ready.

Q: Do you see timed parking as inevitable here?

A: I don’t know. It was all based on the survey for the strategic plan, and that was one of the solutions that came up. It never hurts to try something, but the hard thing with that was, it was a rush. That upset the citizenry as well as the business owners because they said, “We want some involvement in this.” That’s always important.

Q: In the past years I have seen you go through some extraordinary tragedies. The killing of a 2-year-old and attack on her 13-year-old sister, Alana, by Jessica Smith in 2014; and the death of your friend, Seaside Police Lieutenant Jason Goodding, shot by Phillip Max Ferry in February 2016. You have been through more in three years than most cops go through in a lifetime. Talk to me about that.

A: You are right. It has been a career of dealing with different tragedies. The last three years have been very extreme. That’s where it falls down on your coworkers, and your family and your friends, being able to have that and separating yourself from the events. I think dealing with the homicide and Alana was very difficult for me, because the children were around my kids’ ages. You personalize that and put yourself in that situation.

Q: How did you cope?

A: It’s been a career of different tragedies, but the last three years have been extreme. That’s where it comes with your coworkers, your family and your friends. Having my kids and being able to carry on and spend time with my family ...

Cannon Beach is such a great town in dealing with those things.

We got so much assistance from our citizens here and our council. Our different department heads were very



Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn at a press conference in 2014 after 40-year-old Jessica Smith attacked her two children, one of them fatally.

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



helpful and gracious in working with us. That was great.

But also working with the other agencies, when you’re looking at that homicide and Jason’s homicide, the amount of support was amazing. That was a great resource for us. It’s really something.

I think about Jason every day. Just quirks and things that he does and his daughter J.J. — Jayden is my daughter’s best friend. She is my daughter’s age, and she is the spitting image of her dad.

Jason was my first recruit in Seaside. When he first came in he was assigned to me first. We were very close. We helped them move down into town. Our kids have grown up together and my wife and Amy (Goodding) have been very close.

All those memories were good memories. And what a great officer he was.

Those are the things that I think about, the positive things.

Q: Has it affected the way you approach your duties?

A: Absolutely. You always have that police paranoia when you are dealing with different things, whether it’s a traffic stop or other things. You get those situations where the hair kinds of jumps up on the back of your neck.

Phil Ferry was somebody I had dealt with many, many times when I was in Seaside and on the drug task force where we had fought with him and he didn’t have a gun. He had physically fought with us and resisted arrest, but we had not contacted him with a firearm before. That just shows you how easily available weapons are for people.

Q: I know in a very general sense there is a concern about crime in rural parts of our county.

A: There are certainly locals distributing drugs and using drugs. When I was on the drug task force, we had the highest amount of drugs per capita in the state of Oregon, based on our county and the population. So much of it is going back and forth from rural areas.

You also have Highway 101 which stretches from Canada to Mexico. People do not want to go the I-5 route because they know there is more law enforcement out there, bigger agencies. They think they can take this back highway here and they’ll be free. That’s what’s great about having (Gunner) the canine here. We’ve had

that three-and-a-half, four years. He is a great tool to have out there.

Q: In Cannon Beach you are about to get some recreational cannabis shops. Is that a concern?

A: It is certainly something not something support, but I do not see it as being a concern. We have responsible business owners. We have a good City Council that is working on the regulations for our town. What is going to be the need down here? I think (Councilor) George Vetter said it best: We don’t have a McDonald’s because we don’t have a need. Is there going to be a need for a marijuana shop? It will be interesting to see.

Q: Will you be issuing tickets people smoking marijuana in public?

A: Absolutely. There will not be a warning period. The law has been in place for a while.

Q: What would you say is the police department’s biggest need right now?

A: That is a good question. Right now we are trying to fill one of our positions. We lost (Sgt.) Josh (Gregory) to Seaside. Filling that position is probably our biggest need, just for manpower. It’s hard on officers. They’re working longer hours. They’re covering shifts. That’s what’s harder with me splitting both roles. It takes me out of the equation. I’ll cover when I can, but it doesn’t open me up to working a whole lot of extra hours.

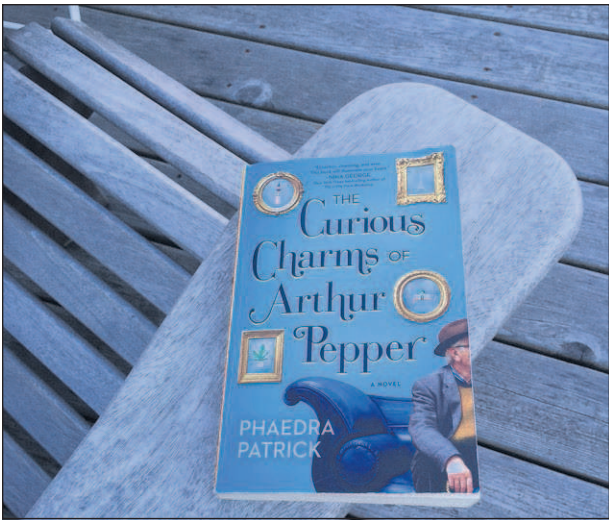
Q: The city of Cannon Beach has a reputation of being far ahead of many other cities for tsunami and emergency preparedness.

A: We have a great CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. We have 42 CERT members now and 21 Medical Reserve Corps members and we’ve recently added Red Cross in the last six months. We’re moving forward in building shelters.

It’s really good. But we still have a lot of work to do. A lot of that will be our South Wind project, of adding a shelter down there and getting funding for it. That is something our emergency management consultant Stacey (Burr) is working on and will be bringing to the council in the next few months to get us started so we can get federal funding. We need to have a shelter up there so we can begin getting grant money.

Q: How can the community provide you with what you need to do your job better?

A: Just showing support. They’ve done that. They’ve gone above and beyond. I think we’re going to do another round to raise money for the canine. Those are ways they can show it. Also by thanking the officers when they see them and helping out when they can.



EVE MARX/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Summer reading at Sandpiper Square.

The peculiar pleasures of reading and people-watching

I had time to kill while waiting for a friend, so I took the book I’ve been reading for my book group over to Sandpiper Square. The book is “The Curious Charms of Arthur Popper,” a novel by Phaedra Patrick. It’s about a recently bereaved 69-year-old bloke (it’s a British novel) named Arthur Popper who lives a pedestrian and narrow life. A retired locksmith, he spends his time making cups of tea and eating sad, solitary meals cadged from casseroles and cakes his recently widowed herself neighbor lady brings him. (He finds her an intrusive pain.) Forcing himself to sort through his late wife’s things, he discovers a valuable charm bracelet. While hunting down the story behind each charm, he learns before they met and married, his wife had exotic adventures, a famous lover; and lived on a great estate where pet tigers freely roamed.

I sat reading on a bench for about a quarter of an hour. It turns out “The Curious Charms of Arthur Popper” is an ideal beach or bench book. The whole time I was reading, I was also able to eyeball and eavesdrop. Although clever and well enough written, the novel is not terribly deep. You can easily read it while taking in other things.

Out of the corner of my eye, I spied what I took to be a pair of honeymooners strolling by.

I overheard a tall red-headed woman speaking loudly into her phone.

“Yesterday we saw rabbits,” she said. “Today we saw deer.”

A middle-aged man walked by with some very serious cameras hung around his neck. No iPhone images for him. A vintage Mustang convertible rolled down Hemlock Street. I totally eyeballed that.

Moments later, an enormous mobile home rumbled by with Nevada plates. Have you noticed how many tourists this summer hail from Nevada? They must come to beat the desert heat.

A pair of women sat on a bench outside Duebers enjoying an old-fashioned catch up. They were very jolly. Their happiness did not extend to two grumpy men on an adjacent bench wearing floppy hats and carrying walking sticks.

A man in his 30s hurried past, bearing a large and wobbly cake box. The expression on his face was pure concentration as he struggled not to drop it. Skipping along at his side was an exuberant young boy. “Do you think Mom will like the cake?” the child asked.

His father responded, “It’s supposed to be a surprise, so help me think where we can hide it.”

Having reached a tiresome passage in my book where the protagonist is feeling very sorry for himself, I pulled out my phone to check the time. It was time to skedaddle. I stood up and placed a bookmark in my book. The moment my butt left the bench, a group of five freckled teenagers rushed in to grab it. And why not? Sandpiper Square is a super spot for people watching. You don’t even need a beach book to hide behind.

VIEW FROM
THE PORCH

EVE MARX



Assiduous study pays off bigtime with an advanced wine degree

‘Passed with Merit.” I read those words with an overwhelming sense of relief, disbelief and accomplishment. After three years of studying and wine tasting, I am now a WSET Level 3 (Advanced) Sommelier.

In 2014, I thought it would be a good idea for me to study wine to increase my knowledge about various grapes and the world’s classic wine regions. Later that year, I registered for the Court of Master Sommeliers Level 1 Class and that September Maryann and I traveled with Ringo, our pitbull mix to Vancouver, British Columbia, for my weekend intensive class and exam. I passed the multiple-choice exam

UNCORKED RAMBLINGS

STEVEN SINKLER



and earned the title “Introductory Sommelier.” It’s a great start, but the title it isn’t all that impressive. “Yes sir, I’m an introductory sommelier,” it’s hardly awe inspiring.

More than anything, the title indicates a basic understanding of wines from around the world. Of course, the journey had to continue; I wasn’t satisfied with being an introductory somm.

I decided to change sommelier programs and moved from the Court

of Masters Sommeliers to the Wine and Spirit Education Trust because they offered more local classes, including classes which matched my work schedule. So in early 2015, I jumped right into WSET’s “intermediate” level 2 program and took a couple of classes in Seattle preparing for the exam. The program change required me to update all of my study materials because WSET has a slightly different emphasis than “the Court.” WSET is focused on wine, with little to no emphasis on distilled spirits or table side service. I took the WSET 2 exam only three days after my dad’s memorial service. That was rough. I completed most of my studies before flying back to Green Bay for the service,

but I listened to podcasts on the plane and was confident as I sat for the exam. As you would expect, the level 2 exam is substantially more difficult than a level 1 exam, but I passed “with merit” and became a WSET intermediate sommelier.

Last fall, I decided to enroll in WSET’s advanced program while talking with a couple other level 2 somms. In fact, we all decided to pursue level 3. My level 3 studies started last fall and I knew it was going to be a challenge. The level 3 exam places emphasis on regional growing conditions such as climate and soil which results in a wine from the same grape tasting differently from one region to another. For example, we would need to

discuss factors which make a pinot gris from Alsace taste different than a pinot grigio from Friuli.

So, now it’s official, I’m a WSET 3 Advanced Sommelier.

There’s only a handful of us around. In my class of 15, there were only two Oregonians. I’m not aware of any other level 3 somm anywhere on the Coast. I want to thank everyone who asked me about the test and provided their support during the eight weeks between taking the test and getting my results. Your words of support and encouragement were very much appreciated. I also want to thank the group of friends who joined the celebration at The Wine Shack. Bubbles and balloons!

Publisher
David F. Pero

Editor
R.J. Marx

Circulation Manager
Jeremy Feldman
Production Manager
John D. Bruijn

Classified Sales
Jamie Ramsdell
Advertising Sales
Holly Larkins
Chris Olson
Staff writer
Brenna Visser

Contributing writers
Rebecca Herren
Katherine Lacaze
Eve Marx
Nancy McCarthy

CANNON BEACH GAZETTE
The Cannon Beach Gazette is published every other week by EO Media Group.
1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, Oregon 97138
503-738-5561 • Fax 503-738-9285

www.cannonbeachgazette.com • email: editor@cannonbeachgazette.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Annually: \$40.50 in county, \$58.00 in and out of county. Postage Paid at: Cannon Beach, OR 97110

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to Cannon Beach Gazette, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103
Copyright 2017 © Cannon Beach Gazette. Nothing can be reprinted or copied without consent of the owners.

THE NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING

CANNON BEACH
GAZETTE

