

The dark side of Gearhart

IMPRESSIONS



By
NANCY MCCARTHY

Just who’s laughing anyway?

In his impassioned speech at a recent Gearhart City Council meeting, Councilor Dan Jesse got it right: The city of Gearhart is being torn apart by the acrimony between Mayor Dianne Widdop and those who are seeking her recall.

For months now, or even years, depending on the issue before the council, the accusations, suspicions and shouting matches have made the monthly meetings nearly unbearable.

If the City Council hopes to encourage community involvement, this is, I guess, one way to do that. The small council chambers always overflows to standing room only. In order to comply with fire marshal regulations, the doors to the exit have to be unlocked, if not open, in case the crowd needs to leave in a hurry.

Some might say those doors would also make for a quick getaway for anyone wishing to escape the tension contained in the room.

There are few “neutral” parties: People are either applauding those who read lists of accusations about the mayor’s lack of respect for the constitutional right of free speech, her disdain for councilors and residents who don’t agree with her and her intention to follow her own agenda without consulting anyone.

Then there are the mayor’s supporters who defend Widdop’s right to offer personal opinions, who remember what they call her “courage” on past issues and who congratulate her on her “forthrightness.” However, the supporters often find themselves being personally grilled by sharp-tongued opponents.

In a quiet town where “livability” and residential character are emphasized, the turbulent City Council meetings have been the community’s dirty little secret.

Only, with recall signs posted on fences and a camera and motion sensor trained on the signs to discourage anyone from removing

them, that turbulence has literally spilled over into the streets.

Add to that recall petitions mailed to Gearhart’s registered voters and a website that lists all of the mayor’s public discretions, and it is apparent that this quiet little town has a dark side.

Widdop, too, has fueled the flames of discontent. Her complaint to the Secretary of State’s office that the recall petition contained “inaccurate, misleading and untruthful statements” has done nothing to change attitudes.

Widdop said this week that she has been told by state officials that her complaint cannot be validated. An official report from the Secretary of State’s Office will be released in a few days.

But the acrimony isn’t contained to just the pro- and anti-Widdop camps. It has leached out to other city issues and touched other residents. Whether the issue is about fences or RVs or short-term rentals, there’s a fair amount of anger.

One resident, who owns an RV and is concerned about a proposed zoning ordinance that spells out how long he can park an RV at his residence, told Widdop at a City Council meeting that he was glad she was the target of a recall effort.

“I hope it’s successful,” he said.



NANCY MCCARTHY — EO MEDIA GROUP

After someone removed the recall signs posted on a fence next to the post office in downtown Gearhart, they were reposted, this time with a camera and motion sensor to monitor them. Recall leader Harold Gable has since removed the signs and monitoring devices. The signs were posted elsewhere in town.

Another resident, who recently expressed a worry that his short-term rental will be affected by a possible ordinance regulating rentals, brought a Christmas card he received to the last council meeting.

On the front of the card was a peaceful photo of the beach. Inside the card was a harsh, anonymous “greeting” that criticized him for his “incessant bleating ramblings.” It was apparent that the man and his wife felt like they had been stalked.

The spark of annoyance that started so long ago has erupted into a fire of animosity that is spreading to all parts of the community.

Dan Jesse said that Gearhart has become a “laughingstock” of Clatsop County, but has it grown into more than that?

Just who’s laughing anyway?

Nancy McCarthy covers South County for The Daily Astorian and is the editor of the Seaside Signal and the Cannon Beach Gazette.

Between the Covers

ESTHER MOBERG

It’s time to read the book that’s been gathering dust

For the new year, why not tackle that one book you have put off reading? You know what I am talking about, that one book you bought in the airport, or the one you keep checking out from the library, only to let it gather dust because every time you look at it, you find an excuse not to pick it up and read it.

For me, that book has been, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. A classic, but because I was home schooled, it was never required reading. Even though I always heard how great it was, I put off reading it for years until finally, this past year, I picked it up, dusted it off and read it. Of course you already know (if you have read it) why so many people recommend it. The setting and characters leap off the page and into your mind, leaving a lasting mark.

Of course, we librarians are the worst at having a “to read” list that keeps getting longer and longer. While I probably won’t be tackling *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* any time soon, there are a few other lighter books that I just might add to my “reading resolutions” for the new year.

I am waiting with impatience for the next books by some authors, while others I am reluctant to start on. While I have enjoyed all of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, for instance, I am reluctant to start reading the books Rowling wrote under a pseudonym for adults, just because I do not want to become disenchanted with her writing.

Sometimes authors have a niche or audience they fit best, and when they try to cross platforms, they fail,



ESTHER MOBERG

at least in my expectations. I personally prefer Neil Gaiman’s children’s books to his books for adults, just because he tones down the dark side of his writing. My “to read” list includes everything from *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* to *Where Did You Go, Bernadette?*

As a Jane Austen fan, I

always keep thinking I will, perhaps, someday read every fiction book ever written about her characters, wishful thinking when you realize there are hundreds of titles published every single year!

There is a quote right now on the Internet about having hobbies. It says, “Have one hobby that keeps you creative, one that makes you money and one that keeps you healthy.” I would say something similar, only about books.

Read one book in 2015 that helps you get organized or perhaps challenges you to live life to the fullest; one book that stirs up your creativity and inspires you; and one that makes you think about your priorities in life, or provides an escape from reality.

Recently, I just read the book, *The Life-Changing*

Magic Of Tidying Up, by Marie Kondo, which, for me, would fit under the “read one book in 2015 that helps you get organized.” This book really has inspired me to take a hard look at all the books and other items I own. I really like how Kondo talks about holding each book you own in your hand to see if it resonates with you. When I hold *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott, in my hand, it makes me think of long rainy winters curled up by a fire. I usually re-read *Little Women* about once every five years.

Kondo also makes a good point that if you haven’t read it yet (and it’s been on your shelf for years), you probably won’t ever get around to reading it. So, start setting those reading goals for 2015. Online, www.shelfari.com

is a great place to track the books you have read. You can set a personal reading goal, and it will let you know how far you have progressed toward that goal as you log each book you read to your “shelf.”

If you do decide to get organized and have some books you are getting rid of, the Friends of the Seaside Library is always looking for donations of books and VHS tapes. Please keep in mind that the books should be in like-new condition, and the VHS tapes should not be home movies or pirated copies. These items are resold in the Friends of the Library bookstore, and the funds are used to purchase more books for the library and/or support library programs. Thank you for your support of the Seaside Library!

Let’s PLAY

DARREN GOOCH

Recreation district looks to the future with a new logo

I have talked a lot in the past about change, and like most people, it has been a constant in my life. Where some of the changes have appeared to be bad in the short term, their effects have proven to be of great benefit in the long run.

As once stated by President John F. Kennedy, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

Change is always an inevitable, immutable force that pushes us into the future as new ideas and inventions take root.

Here at the district, new ideas from staff and input from our patrons drive the



New logo

changes we make every day. Recently, our administrative staff and board of directors chose to update our district logo. The current one has represented the district for many years and will always be a valuable part of our history. However, even it has undergone many minute changes over the years, morphing into what you see today.

The current logo, for all of its beauty and symbolism, suffers from a few limitations that have made it a challenge



DARREN GOOCH

to deal with in certain aspects of our work.

First and foremost, as the designer for district publications, I have seen many changes in the landscape of graphic design since the



Former logo

original logo was developed. It began its life as a piece of low resolution line art, meaning that it was perfect for small print publications, such as those you might add to a Word document that you are sending to a printer attached to your computer, but not scalable enough to send to a commercial printer.

More recently, I invested in a nice polo shirt with a district logo on the front. I noticed that after several washings, the thin lines of the logo had started to crack. After a couple more trips through the washing machine, it was looking pretty sad indeed. Its intricate detail, although beautiful, just didn’t lend itself well to that kind of process.

The new logo, created by local artist Kevin Ames, overcomes the older design’s limitations. Its blockier styling and thicker lines will better withstand the rigors of my washing machine. It also retains much of the symbolism of the former design, with the sun setting behind the water, indicative of the ma-

jestic place we are fortunate enough to call home.

Change is never easy. I don’t think it was meant to be, but if we take President Kennedy’s words to heart, it’s really the future that we should be looking forward to. Having had a great deal of input on it, this is one change that I am very excited about! To see the new design, please visit our website: www.sunsetempire.com.

Darren Gooch is the IT & marketing manager for the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District. District information is always available at sunsetempire.com or by calling 503-738-3311. Darren’s email is dgooch@sunsetempire.com.

Scene and Heard

CLAIRE LOVELL

Gee...maybe you should watch your language

One of the most irritating turns of present day conversation is what I call the Frenchifying of language. Guys started it. Newscasters began with saying things like “seezh” for “siege.” Each time they come to a word ending in a syllable, which should be a hard “g,” they instead use “zh.” The latest of these, if you can believe it, was “scroozhe” at Christmas. Yikes!

Friends gone

We lost two friends in December: Carolyn Mason on Dec. 9 and Betty Mosar, Dec. 6. Carolyn was once my neighbor on Seventh and North Lincoln Street. She had two little pug dogs that ran up and down inside the fence, barking at everyone in sight.

I learned not to be afraid of them because they were always so fierce.

Betty was also a neighbor on Second Avenue when I worked for Avis and Elliott Hurd and lived with them for a while.

Time flies

On New Year’s Eve, I watched the goings on at Times Square with Fox reporters. Moving from one year to the next takes only a minute and it wasn’t actually 2015 for three hours yet because of the time difference. But I looked forward to a clean slate and better health. It’s my intent to eat more nutritious food, get back to regular exercise and get more rest. Although they do say the



CLAIRE LOVELL

pathway to purgatory is paved with proper positions — OK, good intentions, except I love alliteration.

Walk in the rain

One rainy Sunday, I misplaced the key to my house.

Walking the neighborhood for a phone to help me get in, I got roundly soaked. Knocking on doors didn’t help much. I was a pariah in my own environs, and the next day, I had several cold symptoms. (Eventually, I did find the key and got in my house to warm up.)

Piece of cake!

Ordinarily I don’t like cooking shows. Recipes are often too complicated for a simple person like me. One Sunday on PBS, I enjoyed a cake-making contest from the U.K. — about 10 contestants making Suisse rolls. Each had a collection of ingredients to finish their products in a certain time. It was cool. Most of us were rooting for

a certain person. The roll was made of a flat piece of sponge cake with different fillings to show their originality. I felt sorry for the judges who had to sample all the results. They must have been truly nauseated at the end.

Another friend gone

Les Morris (John’s oldest brother) wrote to tell me of the death of Gail Harrison Smith in Sultan, Wash., a while ago. Gail grew up in Seaside (attended high school in the 1950s) and was the daughter of Milton and Irma Harrison of Harrison’s Bakery. She died of cancer a short time after being diagnosed. Gail was a lovely girl and a dear friend. She and her husband operated the Sul-

tan Bakery and Restaurant where they lived, although I didn’t recognize the name of the town. We corresponded infrequently. Her mother and my brother Rudy were sweethearts — probably in their twenties.

Spectacular sunset

Twelfth night ended with a most gorgeous sunset. I saw it from my front porch on North Lincoln Street, so, of course, it was more beautiful at the beach, deep fuchsia colored and all along the horizon. Wish I could have been there.

Laugh line

When a very generous salon worker gave me a nail file, I sang the tune “Thanks for the Emery.”