

Side Rail JON RAHL

Seaside preps as an official Oregon Welcome Center

Have you taken a vacation or day trip through Oregon recently or simply sought out information at a visitor center? If not in Oregon, perhaps in another neighboring state?

As I've written before, one of our primary responsibilities is managing a visitor information center that sees around 20,000 patrons walk through our front door each year.

Visitors are the lifeblood of our community and of many Oregon communities, for that matter. Many times they are Oregonians heading to other parts of the state they call home, but quite often they are travelers from Washington, Idaho, California or farther. It's becoming more and more common for some of those visitors to come from another country. All of them have questions and the desire to experience Oregon, which generally translates to dollars spent in our communities.

A critical way to assist many of these visitors is through the myriad visi-

tor information centers we have across Oregon. From Astoria in the northwest corner to Ontario on the eastern border, Lakeview in the south central section and Brookings in the southwest corner, travelers can find 151 visitor centers operating for at least a portion of every year throughout the state.

That's a pretty astounding number when you stop and think about it, and a lot of places you can ask for help when you need it. It's even more astonishing when you consider that many of the centers staff volunteers that simply love to talk about their hometowns and all of the things you can do there.

Nine of those 151 centers have the distinguished label of official Oregon Welcome Center, selected and run through Travel Oregon. These nine strategic locations are found at key entry points across the state (see graphic), and starting in May, Seaside will become one of the nine.

This is a great honor for



JON RAHL

the Seaside Visitors Bureau and something we are very excited about. While we aren't the first sign of civilization when one drives across the Astoria Bridge, bringing people from Washington to Oregon, we are one of the first visitor centers people come across once they head south along U.S. Highway 101 from that bridge. And with this new role, we'll carry close to 100 more brochures than we have in the past, making our center that much more of an asset and resource to visitors and locals alike.

To help accommodate



SUBMITTED GRAPHIC

Oregon Welcome Centers listed in numerical order are: Seaside, Portland International Airport, Oregon City, Brookings, Ashland, Klamath Falls, Lakeview, Umatilla and Ontario.

this new role, we'll be adding a set of new brochure racks later this spring and have plans to install a new kiosk in early summer that will show inspirational videos and help educate visitors about many activities. We believe it's a win-win for the state and for Seaside. We're a proud

organization that loves to assist our many visitors, and the state gains a partner that can't wait to get started.

If you haven't used our center before, what are you waiting for? Beginning May 1, consider us your one-stop resource for all things Oregon!

Have a thought or question about tourism in Seaside, or maybe an idea for a future column? Send an email to jon@seasideor.com. Jon Rahl is the director of the Seaside Visitors Bureau and assistant general manager of the Seaside Civic & Convention Center.

Scene and Heard CLAIRE LOVELL

Movie showcases the courage of a prisoner of war

One Saturday, we were guests of Dan and Catherine Sellars for the movie, "Unbroken." It was a true story of an Olympic athlete, Louis Zamperini, who was a prisoner of war in Japan. He and his companions crashed into the sea and were adrift for close to two months, starving and dying and eating some atrocious things.

We have no conception of or appreciation for the many actions of our service men and women to protect us, both then and now. We should be thankful for them every day. This soldier — I think he was a bombardier — returned from the service to run in the Olympics one

more time. Many details of the prison camp I can't recall, but it happened, and the movie was well worth seeing. Angelina Jolie produced the movie because she was so impressed by the protagonist's story, and he approved the movie.

Old isn't bad

At the Methodist Church, some of us are enjoying a seven-week course of studies and discussions on the last third of life, its problems, solutions and attitudes. Ron Crandall, former Methodist pastor, conducts the lively group, and we've discovered that getting old is not so bad. Sessions



CLAIRE LOVELL

are held in the Fireside Room of the church every Wednesday at 3 p.m. The only charge is \$9 for the textbook — good reading at any time. So far, we've

had only three meetings — probably four by the time you read this, so it's still possible to join in.

Name change

When I was growing up, there was the Astoria Hotel and the Astor Column. Now it seems to be turned around to the Astor Hotel and the Astoria Column. There should be a vote or something in print. I'm sorry, folks. Whenever I see that monument on the hill, it will always be the Astor Column to me. Anything less sounds so generic. Does anyone ask, "Who was its namesake? Mr. Astoria?"

I had already written

these observations about it when the paper arrived with the "In One Ear" explanation. Whatever is the true name, I still prefer Astor Column. How could the word "Astoria" represent Lewis and Clark and all the rest of history's heroes? Besides, those two guys belong to us.

Visiting doe

On Jan. 27, my little doe friend visited again. This is at least the fourth time for her of which I've been aware. She has grown so much and was then resting against my back fence, watching me and, of course, understanding what I said.

The next phase is to give her a name.

Super soup

Super Bowl turned up several ways to use avocados and I'm trying the one that says drop several chunks into a bowl of chicken noodle soup. Sounds like fun.

Laugh line

A 10-year-old under the tutelage of her grandmother was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then one day she astonished her grandmother by asking, "Which virgin was the mother of Jesus? The virgin Mary or the King James vergin [sic]?" (Borrowed from church.)

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