

Side Rail

JON RAHL

Room for improvement when it comes to customer service

Five years ago, as I was getting settled with my new job and situated in Seaside, the mantra was that the summer season begins on July 4. And I believe for many, that sentiment still holds strong. School is out, the weather is phenomenal and we have a plethora of events that bring droves of people to town. Yet on the heels of record visitation over the past 12 months, it's safe to say that we are more of a year-round destination than we've ever been before. Regardless of where you sit on that spectrum, when do you look at your business and find ways to improve?

For many, the answer to that question is probably, "Always, it's a constant process." The training, the coaching, encouragement and analyzing are things

many business owners do on a daily or weekly basis. Quite honestly, when it comes to customer service, my opinion is that you should always be looking at ways to be better. But there's also that window of opportunity that tends to make sense, and around here that window seems to be the lull (if we can still call it that) between May and July 4 where business traffic seems to slow down a bit.

With that thought process in play, the City of Seaside Visitors Bureau held its second annual customer service and secret shopper campaign the first two weeks of May. We learned a thing or two the first go around and were determined to provide an even better analysis the second time. From the be-



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ginning, we wanted this to be business driven. Our aim was not to surprise businesses or ridicule them. The goal from day one has been to offer feedback about the customer experience for business owners who are interested to know how their customer service

rates. With ten volunteers in last year's crop, we saw a jump to 15 for 2015 and actually had very little similarity in participants.

So how do we look as a community? First, a quick description of our system: Last year we analyzed six categories (store appearance, greeting, staff attention, staff appearance, the selling process and the time it took to complete a transaction). This year we added product knowledge, whether our unpaid secret shopper would recommend the business, and if the business did anything to elevate the experience for the shopper.

Overall, we actually improved our customer service rating from 86 percent to 89 percent by using a scale of one to ten for all

previously mentioned categories. Our greeting took a hit, decreasing from 98 percent to 89 percent, but participants improved dramatically with the selling and care they provided to the shopper, increasing from 78 percent to 89 percent. Five our businesses graded out with an A+ (99-100 percent), four received an A grade (90-98 percent), while five graded in at a B. Unfortunately, while there were no C grades, two dining participants received D ratings. Their biggest downfalls: the greeting, selling and care, and time of transaction.

We also learned that our shoppers felt our participating businesses could improve the overall first impression. How does it look when you first walk

through the doors? Go look right now!

A 600-word column cannot do this topic justice, but it will hopefully provide guidance for the customer service experience in Seaside. Close to a million people visit Seaside every year and we owe it them, our employers, and each other to help foster the best experience possible. Let's please remember that as we launch into what promises to be a fantastic summer in Seaside.

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

Scene and Heard

CLAIRE LOVELL

Reminiscing about the good old days in Seaside

Why doesn't the person who owns the little train on Broadway either fix it up or remove it so someone else can use the space? I see little children with their fingers clasped in the fence, look longingly at the little choo choo and wish they could take a ride. They used to have Gayway Park. Now there are the carousel, bumper cars and a Bucket on the Beach. Whoopee!

There hasn't been any movement at the renovation of the Beacon Hotel, either. What has been done looks good, but please, let it go on.

I know there are other opinions. I'll always believe old Seaside was a lot more fun.

The Kentucky Derby and The Preakness were both great to watch. I had plans to take in the Belmont Stakes for a day at the races. Darn! My TV was on the wrong station and by the time I'd figured that out, American Pharoah had already won the Triple Crown by five and a half lengths. They had a couple of re-runs of the final few seconds. I'd hoped for the total race, but NBC was so jealous of its ownership.

On the 24th, I went with my niece Judy and her husband Mike to the Sunday Market in

Astoria. I'm not very good under those conditions because of all the walking. I'm also too thrifty to pay their inflated prices so it's mostly just a tour. I did get some caramel corn and Judy bought me some yakisoba noodles. It was good but saltless. There were lots of dogs on hand. A least three Great Danes and two little Chihuahua pups stood out. One of the Danes looked more like a horse. Lots of other pooches gave no trouble.

Several of our friends lately have been hospitalized with dehydration. Evidently they forgot the admonition to drink six to eight glasses of water every day. In warmer weather when we exercise more and meals are more irregular, it behooves us to remember to drink — H2O or juice — that is. It's really important for electrolyte balance and optimum good health. What would we do if we lived in Africa where people have been dropping from 120-degree temperatures and water is scarce? Drink! Drink!

I had another long walk the other day. My legs were hurting and I had to hesitate from time to time. A guy drove by and stopped to tell me, "You need to pick up the speed a little." In my usual



CLAIRE LOVELL

sweet way, I told him, "Look out or I'll hit you with my stick!" What a relief to finally get home.

I called Dooger's on June 6 to see if the flags were out downtown. They weren't. If ever we would honor our fallen heroes, it should certainly be D-Day. So many of our young men probably knew they'd never wake up on June 7 after Omaha Beach and yet they went bravely to the task at hand, fighting to save our country and our world. Though we owe them so much, many get short shrift from our government.

Laugh lines:

Children in the back seat cause accidents. Or is it "accidents in the back seat cause children?"

Rotary honors Seaside Fire and Rescue Team



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chris Dugan, Pastor Rob Sachs, Doug Barker, Lisa Telamentez, Dave Rankin, Evan Edwards, Katie Bulleset, Chief Joey Daniels and Seaside Rotary member Russ Vandenberg. Seaside Rotary's Russ Vandenberg presented the Seaside Fire and Rescue Team with the award for high ethical standards for a business or organization at the Seaside Rotary meeting on Thursday, June 4, at the Shilo Inn oceanfront location.

Library to host monthly trivia night July 9

On Thursday, July 9, at 6 p.m. the Seaside Public Library will host its monthly Team Trivia Tournament. Teams can consist of one person or have as many as six people.

Trivia nights are informal, fun, competitions where teams battle to see who has the greatest

knowledge of all matters trivial. General questions will be asked by our trivia host and the winners are the team which, at the end of the night, has correctly answered the most questions. Prizes will be awarded, but the main prize is knowing you have the smartest trivia team in Clatsop County.

Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway, across from the youth center and swimming pool. For more information on this event or other library activities call (503) 738-6742 or visit www.seasidelibrary.org and at www.facebook.com/seasidepubliclibrary

Obituaries

Mary Louise Browning

Aug. 23, 1925 — June 17, 2015

Mary Louise Browning, 89, passed away June 17, 2015, in Portland. Mary was born Aug. 23, 1925, at Emmanuel Hospital, to Guy A. and Marie J. Randles. She graduated from Jefferson High School in June 1943.

Mary worked for the Maritime Commission during World War II. She held various secretarial positions until she joined the Oregon Bank. After 12 years, she retired as assistant branch manager due to illness.

In 1979, she moved to Cannon Beach. Despite medical challenges, she volunteered at the Chamber of Commerce, was a mem-



Mary Louise Browning

ber of the Seaside Hospital Auxiliary, Seaside Ladies of the Elks BPOE 168, and enjoyed the Cannon Beach Literary Club. Mary was a longtime member of the Astoria Country Club, where

she spent many happy hours at the bridge table.

She was a beautiful woman and a loving mother to her surviving children: Diane L. Verger and her husband Jim of Coos Bay, David W. Burton of Northfield, Minn., Denise A. Burton of Portland and Damon P. Burton of Portland.

She was preceded in death by her first husband, Dudley W. Burton; and her second husband, Everett H. Browning.

There will be a private interment at Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Portland. Arrangements are under the direction of Pegg, Paxson and Springer Funeral Chapel in Beaverton, Ore.

Mary Elizabeth Cotter

Dec. 18, 1923 — March 13, 2015

Mary Elizabeth Cotter, 92, of Seaside, passed away March 13, 2015. She was born Dec. 18, 1923, in Bandon, Ore., to parents Thomas Harrison Scott and Laurabelle (Chamberlain) Scott.

Mary was married to Arnold Max Eaker and had a son, Tom Eaker, who died in 1988. Surviving are her grandsons, Danny and Tracy Eaker, and granddaughter, Brenda Brady, and their families.

She later married Emery Louis Cotter, who died in



Mary Cotter

1994. By that marriage she had a son, John Cotter. A

grandson, Mitchell Cotter, died in 2005. Also surviving is a granddaughter, Melinda Cotter (Cook), and her family.

Mary is also survived by three nieces, Ruth Pratt, Carolyn Ketchum, and Rose Mentzer and their families.

Mary lived primarily in Bandon, Walton, and Seaside, Ore. She loved mushroom hunting, gardening, her Airedales, and Southern gospel music.

She will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Jean Maunula Reed Moore

June 27, 1920, June 14, 2015

Jean Maunula Reed Moore was born in Astoria, Ore., on June 27, 1920, to Elmer and Anna Bruce Maunula. She passed away on June 14, 2015, in Lakeview, Ore.

She attended school in Astoria and was crowned Queen of the Astoria Regatta in 1937. Jean graduated valedictorian of her high school class in 1938. She attended Oregon State College for two years before returning to Astoria.

She was employed by the Lower Columbia Creamery until her marriage to Robert Wilkinson Reed in September 1941. Jean was a busy farm wife while lovingly raising six children. The Reed home, on Clatsop Plains, was a bustling hub of activities. The dinner table was always crowded with immediate family, friends of the children and hungry bachelors.

After the children were raised, Jean was employed as a bookkeeper for Lou-

ma CPA and Crown-Zellerbach. While working at Crown Zellerbach, Jean met, and later married, Dan C. Moore of Seaside, Ore.

Jean's retirement years were spent collecting button hooks, Hull pottery, Norman Rockwell figurines and antique furniture. Jean enjoyed making cross-stitch samplers for her family. She enjoyed playing Skip-Bo on a daily basis with family and friends.

When playing cards with Jean, you needed to bring your "A" game. She always completed the daily crossword puzzles in ink. She knew her answers were correct. The Oregon Coast, razor clam dinners, warm weather, and Phillip's Candies truffle mints were among Jean's favorites.

Jean is survived by her son, William Reed (Madeleine) of Warrenton, Ore.; daughters, Judy Wiswall (Richard) of Pasco, Wash., Sally Maxwell

(Larry) of Lakeview, Ore., Andrea Flynn (Dennis) of Lakeview, Ore., and Carolyn O'Leary (Jerry) of Paisley, Ore.; stepdaughter, Chris Waugh (Bruce) of Otter Rock, Ore.; sister, Margy Smith of Astoria, Ore.; and special family friend, Cathy Coleman (Steve) of Molalla, Ore. Jean also leaves her 18 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and nieces and nephews, with whom she was close.

Jean was preceded in death by her parents; husbands; infant son, Bruce; daughter, Rebecca Reed Kieley; stepdaughter, Janet Diaz; and sister, Lois Robben.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be made to the Pioneer Presbyterian Church on Clatsop Plains, 33324 Patriot Way, Warrenton, OR 97146, or a charity of your choice.

A celebration of life will be held with immediate family.

Deaths

Debra Lynn Decker, June 17, 2015 — DECKER, Debra Lynn, 58, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center in Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Seaside Signal publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include a small photo and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. The deadline for all obituaries is

9 a.m. the business day prior. Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at www.dailyastorian.com/obituaryform, by email at ewilson@dailyastorian.com,

placed via the funeral home or in person at The Daily Astorian office, 949 Exchange St. in Astoria. For more information, call 503-325-3211, ext. 257.