

An 'evolving vision' leads to a classy roadside eatery

Ruby's from Page 1A

"We kind of took an existing building, and this is what we ended up with," Candace Remer said. "And I think it ended up a lot better than we thought it could."

For Quackenbush, the project presented the unprecedented opportunity to contribute to the design of a commercial building, whereas in the past, he has worked off a set of plans from an architect. During the design phase, Quackenbush said, his main focus was collaborating with the Remers and "listening to what they wanted for the flavor of the building and doing the best to meet their expectations."

An evolving vision

The Remers, who live in Seattle, purchased the property about a year and a half ago. Their original vision for the location was smaller and more subtle: to remove the gas station entirely and build a hotdog stand named Dog Bites, David Remer said. As they began the process, however, "we realized there was more we could do than our initial plan," he said.

In the beginning, it was easier for the team — which included restaurant manager/operator Mark Newsome to identify what characteristics they didn't want: corporate, franchise, pre-made and formulaic.

Rather, they wanted the restaurant design to inspire an atmosphere that was honest, open and welcoming, and their choices during the five-month construction phase reflected that. The walls were kept in their original place. Duct work and electrical conduits are still visible. Roll-up doors — remnants of the building's past life as a gas station — now open to patio seating and a sweeping view of Seaside's Mill Ponds and the eastern mountain range. Two of the walls and counter are constructed from refurbished wood from a 1940s barn. A large fire pit invites guests outdoors, regardless of weather. Inside seating is primarily comprised of picnic tables.

The synthesis of the restaurant's physical layout, ambience and menu places it in the category of fast casual dining, with "better food sold informally like this," David Remer said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

The old 76 gas station has been transformed into a new restaurant, Ruby's Roadside Grill, serving American fare in a fast-casual environment.

It's a place a person could be accompanied by their dog. Which is fitting, as the restaurant's namesake, CEO and chairman, according to the Remers, is their black Labrador retriever, Ruby.

"We're so infatuated with dogs," David Remer said. They also love the beach — hence why they acquired a second home in Seaside nine years ago — and "the beach is all about a dog."

"This has all fallen together like an obvious puzzle," he

added.

The Remers were working with Quackenbush on a different project when they started planning for their restaurant. They asked him to come on board, a valuable contribution to the team.

"He didn't just build it," David Remer said. "He helped us create it."

The Remers also were looking for a general manager when they were referred to Newsome by a mutual friend. Using his extensive history in

the restaurant industry, Newsome crafted a menu around David Remer's original vision, hot dogs, fries, shakes and some specialty items, like sautéed Brussel sprouts, chowder, fish tacos and breakfast burritos.

"I started playing with different recipes at home to make it a varied menu," Newsome said.

Another valuable player for the restaurant is associate manager Timmy Matthews, former owner of Guido and Vitto's. Because of her expertise and relationship with many community members, "she's been a real asset," Newsome said.

Cleaning up the 'welcome mat'

The Remers and Quackenbush feel the location of Ruby's is beneficial for both the restaurant and the city.

For starters, the decrepit gas station "was such an eyesore as you roll into Seaside," Candace Remer said. The Remers wanted to change that as a way of investing in the community.

From a business perspective, they feel the strategic lo-

cation makes them accessible to those coming or going from Seaside.

"We get an early crack at them," David Remer added.

Quackenbush had the idea to further take advantage of the location by removing the swath of invasive species to the east, which opened up a view of the Mill Ponds. They even added a gravel pathway leading to the park's trail, and the Remers made an agreement with Clatsop County to keep the invasive species cleared.

The goal is to beautify the area, which "is the welcome mat to Seaside from the south," Quackenbush said.

The original plan was to open the restaurant in July, but the weather and other issues postponed the opening. Even after taking customers starting in early September, the Remers consider this a soft opening and an opportunity to test facets of the operation, such as the pay point, order point, service and delivery, and seek out any problems.

"Because of the abundance of customers, we're finding them quickly," David Remer said. "We're being punished with our own good fortune."

The next tsunami: Two authors contemplate 'when,' not 'if'

By Susan Romersa
For Seaside Signal



SUSAN ROMERSA/FOR SEASIDE SIGNAL
Buzz Bernard and Bonnie Henderson had a packed house as they discussed their books about earthquakes, tsunamis, and the Cascadia Fault.

Living on the North Coast, we are always aware of the dire prediction of "the big one" hitting us — followed by a huge tsunami which will wipe out our area. We are told, as we go about our daily lives, that it is not a case of "if" but "when" such a disaster will occur.

Two authors have written books on the subject, one fiction and one nonfiction. This drew a standing-room-only crowd at Beach Books in Seaside on Saturday, Sept. 12. A conversation ensued about this inevitable event and our fascination with the subject.

Acclaimed novelist and former 13-year meteorologist at the Weather Channel H.W. "Buzz" Bernard discussed his latest book "Cascadia," a fictional novel which imagines an earthquake and tsunami in a fictionalized Manzanita. His newest book follows on the heels of his 2012 disaster thriller "Eyewall."

Bernard was born in Eugene and raised in Portland. In his work, he makes a point of meticulous fact-checking and

describes his writing niche as "weather-related thrillers." "Cascadia" is his fifth novel.

"I don't focus on the disaster," he said. "What drives a book is its characters which are set against the main plot and subplots — in this case — a massive earthquake and tsunami."

In "Cascadia," a respected geologist visiting his brother finds he must make two gut-wrenching decisions, each with life or death consequences. The book is set in the fictional community of Cascadia on the Pacific Northwest coast over 300 years ago, on the present site of Seaside.

"I'm not entirely certain

there was an Indian village there in 1700, the date of the scene, but I do know there were several small Clatsop settlements in that area in 1805 when members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived," Bernard said.

Even though Pacific Northwest residents are completely familiar with the subduction zone risk, Bernard said, when he has spoken elsewhere, readers are largely unaware of our region's seismic threats.

Henderson, author of "The Next Tsunami: Living on a Restless Coast," told the Beach Books audience she tries to incorporate a sense of story and consciousness in her work.

In writing "The Next Tsunami," the Seaside native performed copious research and consulted with experts like Oregon State University's Chris Goldfinger and Seaside geologist Tom Horning.

Henderson told the audience she works on character development as well in her creative nonfiction, and Horning proved the model for a wonderful character.

Horning experienced the 1964 tsunami caused by an

Alaskan earthquake. He was 10 at the time the distant quake was felt in Seaside, where despite its distance, carefully maintained lawns were transformed into sawlogs, sand and dead fish.

Geologists know the last local tsunami occurred on Jan. 26, 1700, and a major Cascadia subduction zone event is overdue. That event took place 300 feet from Broadway, Henderson said.

We are constantly reminded about it by weather radios, drills, sirens, and emergency preparations to have on hand. Our schools are located in vulnerable and unsafe areas

and voters will decide in the next election whether or not to move them to higher ground — a plan that will come with a cost to taxpayers. It is in no small measure that through

works like those of Bernard and Henderson that awareness of the tsunami threat has risen.

Their books are available at Beach Books, 616 Broadway, in Seaside.

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