

Experiencing close encounters of the bird kind

GUEST COLUMN
LOU SOLITSKE



Each morning and afternoon I walk down Broadway towards the sea. I am quick to offer up a friendly good morning and a tip of my hat to many of the folks passing by, most of the time I get a smile and a good morning in return.

Festooned with many cameras, one of them with a very large lens gets me noticed. Often people comment on me and my load, “nice cameras!” someone would exclaim as we pass in opposite directions. “Nice scenery” I throw over my shoulder. I love leaving them laughing.

I cross the bridge over the Necanicum River and spot a cormorant struggling with a good-sized bull fish. I swiftly raise my camera with the long lens, focus in on the unfolding drama and snap off 15 shots in quick succession.

I continue on Broadway towards it’s cul-de-sac terminus known by the locals as the Turnaround, I encounter Lucky, a red Queensland

heeler and his human, Paul. Lucky perceives an eating opportunity and greets me enthusiastically. He knows that I have a stash of beef jerky in my pocket. I give him a big slab of the dried meat. He gobbles it down. My late wife Jackie would say no more dogs, no more husbands and not necessarily in that order. So, now I have to spoil other people’s dogs. When I lost my Jackie, so many people here were very kind to me. I have found a home in this pretty town by the side of the sea.

I have made many friends here in Seaside, most of them have four legs or feathers. Pressing on, I am followed by a contingent of crows. I leave bagel bits as I go and the crows grab them up as soon as they’re tossed. The sparrows see me coming, as well. A sparrow’s brain weighs about a gram and yet, these clever little critters recognize me and will flutter right in front of my face to announce their presence. They too get tiny bits of bagel. Nearing the Turnaround, I am spotted and a couple of gulls let loose with their feeding calls, alerting the other gulls to the presence of plentiful bagel bits. Soon the sky is full of hungry birds.

I play my harmonica some of them gather around and pretend to



Photographer Lou Solitske looks to the skies and finds friends.

be music lovers but, I know they’re only interested in my bagel bits. When I’m done playing, I apologize to the people upon whom I have inflicted my tunes and explain to them that I can’t play my harmonica at home because my cat

hates it. Some of the birds will light upon my head and gobble the bits I hand up to them. On a cold winter morning one of my regular gull-pals, Gracie, stopped taking the bagel bits and just stood there. I could feel her moving her feet back

and forth on my head. It suddenly dawned on me that she was using the heat from my noggin to keep them warm. It’s great that after all these years, I have finally found my purpose in life.

Gracie, my cameras and me.

Keep up with your child’s immunization schedule

Vaccines: Safe, effective and necessary for a healthy community

It’s September, and school is starting again. Lots of kids coming back to lots of classrooms, carrying books, paper and pen to school, and carrying sniffles and coughs back home.

As a parent, you know that when it comes to sickness, kids share generously.

If your children have been in school before, you also know that in a few months, “exclusion day” will come around, and if your children don’t have their vaccinations up to date, they’ll be excluded from school until they do.

Many of us remember when childhood illnesses were a fact of life for most kids. Measles, chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough and a whole gamut of nasty sicknesses could keep both child and parent home from school and work.

Since safe, effective vaccines for these illnesses became available in the early 1970s, these illnesses have nearly disappeared. In fact, they are so rare

GUEST COLUMN
PATTI ATKINS
COLUMBIA PACIFIC CCO

now that most doctors, nurses and parents have never seen them. Like most states, Oregon requires children attending school to show proof that their vaccinations are up to date. However, some parents still choose not to vaccinate their children, often because of concerns that the vaccines may be harmful.

That’s not a good idea, says Safina Koreishi, MD, Columbia Pacific CCO medical director. “Sending your child to school without all the recommended vaccinations puts both the child and all the other kids at risk of getting sick. And some of these illnesses are serious enough to put a child in the hospital.”

Here’s what can happen if we ease up on vaccinations. In 1994, Japan’s vaccination campaign against pertussis (whooping cough) had reduced the disease to only 393 reported cases.

Because of the success of the campaign, many people thought that the vaccine wasn’t needed any more. Others believed that the vaccine itself was dangerous. Just a few years later, vaccination had dropped way off, the country had 13,000 cases of whooping cough, and 41 children died.

It can happen here. Last winter, the biggest rash of measles cases in years occurred nationwide. The first big center for the disease: Clark County, in the Portland metropolitan area. There were 81 confirmed cases of measles in Washington, and 800 children were kept home from school to control the outbreak.

“As long as these preventable diseases occur anywhere in the world, we should be sure to vaccinate all of our children,” says Dr. Koreishi. “It only takes one international traveler who arrives in the U.S infected — and a population with even a few kids and adults who aren’t vaccinated — to set off an outbreak here. That’s what happened in Clark County.”

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