

# From Seaside to Ashgabat

SEEN FROM SEASIDE  
R.J. MARX



One of the things I noticed as we climbed along the road at Portland’s Mount Tabor was a distinguished-looking gentleman standing proudly over the city.

This was Harvey W. Scott, editor from the Oregonian newspaper from 1866-1872.

“There was never a day of the many years of his long-sustained ascendancy in the life of Oregon in which he didn’t stand somewhat apart and somewhat in advance of his immediate world,” the Oregon Historical Quarterly wrote after his death in 1913.

It is interesting and somewhat heartening to know that a newspaperman is immortalized in the Rose City; oddly he is looking away from the way he is pointing.

Few newspaper editors make it to stone — I remember the famous Horace Greeley monument in Chappaqua, New York. Greeley, the editor and founder of the New York Tribune, is also the man who coined the phrase “Go West, young man!”

I guess newspaper people in the 19th century were prone to giving directions.

Those “ink-stained wretches” staked out a regional audience — Scott in Oregon, Greeley in New York — with a few staking claim to the national stage: William Randolph Hearst, Adolph Ochs Sulzberger of the New York Times and William Allen White, the “Sage of Emporia Kansas.”

Until the internet age, not much changed about newspapers or the way people made them. When I started in the business, people were still using scissors to cut and paste.

One of the things White (who coined the phrase “What’s the matter with Kan-

sas?” way back in 1896) did impart in Kansas was the study of journalism, and in late August I received an email from from Ann Brill, dean of the William Allen White School of Journalism & Mass Communications, University of Kansas.

With it came a link to a survey Hong Vu, a former journalist researching the effects of fake news/misinformation on the profession.

I completed the survey — rating the impacts of “fake news,” responses, and how (if at all) it has changed our approach to journalism at the Signal.

Questions included:  
•Do we interact with the public on social media? (Yes.)  
•Do we call out fake news proactively? (Not enough.)  
•What is our responsibility for setting the record straight? (Important.)

These are great questions and set me thinking.

In a day when reporters send in copy remotely — sometimes from thousands of miles away — means that much of local news is provided by anyone with a Facebook or a Twitter profile. At the dawn of the digital age, this was called “citizen journalism,” but in a world without scrutiny, fact-checking or vetting, the only voices heard are the loudest.

Every Facebook post, every tweet, every ill-conceived late night online barb is as likely as anything else to be considered “truth.”

And when those comments are posted, you don’t know if they’re being posted by someone in Warrenton or in Wyoming, Seaside or Samarkand.

One of the statistics that came out from our digital traffic reports — the weekly measure of the online edition’s digital traffic — yielded startling geographic data.

In early July, online statistics showed more people from Portland than from Seaside read our newspaper on their phones and computers. Second-most traffic comes from Seaside, with digital traffic also coming in volume from

Astoria and Seattle. In the top 10 along with Beaverton, Warrenton and Vancouver, you could also find Moscow and Ashgabat.

At first I thought that must be Moscow, Idaho, but — I don’t think so.

And where is Ashgabat?

Google it and you’ll discover Ashgabat is the capital of Turkmenistan, the energy-rich country in central Asia. Ashgabat is known “for its white marble buildings and grandiose national monuments,” Google informs us. “To the northwest, the sprawling Ruhy Mosque has a vast gilt dome.”

According to the Guardian in 2017, “there is no justice in Turkmenistan, because the entire judicial system is in the hands of the president and the Ministry of National Security, which he controls.”

“Keep a low profile,” the U.S. Embassy warned visitors in May. “Be aware of your surroundings. U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance and to practice good situational awareness.”

Why were thousands of Ashgabat-ers reading the Seaside Signal? Or were they?

The British journalism website newswired.com reports a Swedish company named United Robots uses bots to automate large datasets to produce content on sports, property, local business and breaking news, with around 2,000 stories pushed out every day.

Is there an equivalent of United Robots in Turkmenistan? Will that remote nation use use international newspapers “to push out” stories for their own gain?

I am glad to say that as of our last report, Ashgabat has dropped from its position in the Top 10 of Seaside Signal’s digital audience.

The new Top 10: Portland, Seaside, Seattle, Beaverton, Moscow, Salem, Vancouver, Warrenton and Cannon Beach. Ashgabat comes in at No. 11.

So how do you know fake news when you see it?

I was drawn to an analysis of the aforementioned editor Harvey Scott in the 1913 Oregon Historical Quarterly.

Scott’s ethic may be described as the antithesis of fake news.

“Never at any moment of Mr. Scott’s professional life was there any concession on his part to the vice of carelessness and perfunctory work,” Albert Holman wrote in a retrospective of the Oregonian editor at the time. “Scrupulousness with respect to small as well as large matters, was in the case of Mr. Scott sustained upon instinct and principle.”

Holman recalled an illustration of Scott’s character, the editor’s retort to a “shallow and pretentious man” who had ventured to discuss a financial issue with him.

In the ensuing conversation, “driven from every point of his assumption,” he doggedly remarked, “Well, Mr. Scott, I have as good a right to my opinion as you have to yours.”

“You have not,” the editor returned. “You speak from the standpoint of mere presumption and emotion, without knowledge, without judgment. You speak after the manner of the foolish. I speak from the basis of painstaking and laborious study.

“You have no right to an opinion on this subject; you have not given yourself the labors which alone can justify opinion,” the editor continued. “You do not even understand the fundamental facts upon which an opinion should be based.

“You say your opinion is as good as mine. It will be time enough for this boast when you have brought to the subject a teachable mind and when you have mastered some of its elementary facts.

“But I fear even then you will be but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, for the very lack of judgment which permits you now to assume judgment without knowledge is but a poor guaranty of your character.

“I bid: you good-day, sir!”



The Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque or Gypjak Mosque, about five miles west of the Ashgabat city center.

Advantour

## Rediscovering the patty melt, an American comfort food classic

VIEW FROM  
THE PORCH

EVE MARX



I don’t like to rub it in too much to our less lucky friends, but here in Seaside, we live in a great neighborhood for good eats. We don’t have to get in the car to find a superlative breakfast, lunch, or dinner, and that’s not even counting the Hamilton Market, which just opened — I’ve been popping in to the new market most every day. Their produce is fresh and delicious, and, slowly but surely, they’ve been restocking the shelves with the high grade items I might find, say, at Natural Grocer or Whole Foods. I love how

responsive they are to requests. For example, after acknowledging my preference for Brown Cow yogurt, it miraculously appeared in the refrigerated case. My husband loves their ever growing inventory of enticing, healthy snacks.

As a lifelong fan of British novels, in particular the works of Iris Murdoch, Ruth Rendell, and P.D. James, I’ve always enjoyed pub scenes. The corner pub is a British tradition. Pubs, as any reader of Brit novels knows, are where life happens, The U Street Pub is very like a traditional British corner pub, where regulars can tuck in to a bowl of chili, have a hearty sandwich, or a dinner of fish and chips. Beer must flow. The U Street Pub has great beers on tap. What I love about The U Street Pub is that it’s a place where even if no one knows your name, the staff knows



Eve Marx

The patty melt sandwich at The U Street Pub is British delicious. Don’t forget the beef au jus dip.

your face, and quite often your drink preference.

When we first started being Pub regulars, I went for the shrimp po’ boy. Next I moved on to wings and a Caesar salad. After that I became enamored of the steamed clams “Harbor Style” which comes with a generous hunk of garlic bread.

Then I discovered the patty melt.

A patty melt is the British answer to the American cheeseburger. It’s a hot beef sandwich consisting of a well done hamburger patty, melted Swiss cheese, topped with caramelized onion slipped between two slices of bread, never a bun. The whole shebang is then slapped on a hot griddle and pressed down slightly with a spatula.

It’s greasy.

It’s messy.

If you’re inclined to heartburn, you’ll be sorry, but you’ll still eat it.

Should you be a whiz in the kitchen or merely disinclined to dine out, you can purchase the ingredients to make an authentic patty melt at home from the Hamilton Market. They have beauti-

ful organic grass-fed ground beef that makes a wonderful burger. They have sliced bread of the hearty sort. They have sliced Swiss cheese. They have onion.

In a medium-sized bowl, mix the ground beef with Worcestershire sauce and a dash of salt and pepper. Form into patties. Melt a little butter in a skillet and cook patties over medium heat on both sides until totally done in the middle. Can’t be rare! Assemble the cooked patties on slices of bread adding a slice of Swiss cheese and cooked onions. Top with another slice of bread and return to a medium hot skillet, which has been prepped with butter. Press the sandwich down with a spatula; after a minute, flip and cook on the other side. Slide on to a plate and serve immediately. Don’t spare the napkins.

SEASIDE  
**Signal**



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