

SignalViewpoints

Faith led Cragin to Seaside

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



Photos by R.J. Marx

ABOVE: Reginald Cragin plays drums at Quatat Park on Jan. 18. BELOW: Cragin enjoys the outdoor life in Seaside.



Originally an Episcopalian, he was introduced to the rosary, a form of devotion to the Virgin Mary, by a woman named Sister Mary while attending a Bible study meeting. “The rosary came into my life 10 years ago,” Cragin said. “I thought, ‘Why haven’t

I known about this before?’ I loved it. Every single day became an opportunity.”

Not long after, a chance encounter changed his personal direction.

Cragin was working in a package store when a customer came in and said he needed someone to drive a car west. Cragin saw providence in the opportunity. He left his job and apartment the next day.

“I had been praying for so long for something to happen that it seemed that this was what I had been waiting for,” he said. “I took it as a sign and went with it. I shut my eyes, and when I opened them, God put me here.”

The Oregon Coast was everything he was looking for. Cragin arrived in September 2016. He found a job as a night auditor at a Seaside hotel and an apartment within a week.

“I had no place to live. I had no job. One place called me in and said they would like to

talk to me. ‘Can you come back for an interview?’ I said sure. I started the next week.”

He’s had the job ever since.

The night hours remind Cragin of his New York City days. He goes to sleep at noon and wakes up two hours before his shift at 11 p.m. “I wake up every night, pray the rosary, go to my shift and then come home at 7 a.m. and I can spend each morning surfing. I love Seaside.”

He’s now playing his drums every Sunday and Monday at Quatat Park from noon to 3 or 4 p.m.

“I’d been depressed and suffering for so long and praying each and every day, that when I showed up at Seaside it was like all my dreams and all my prayers had come to fruition,” Cragin said.

“I thank God each and every day for living in Seaside. All the people are so wonderful and I love it here so much.”

Blake: ‘We were at home safe, healthy and blessed all the way to the end’

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1918, in Denver, Colorado. She was 13 when her mother died from a heart condition at age 42. Her father, a pharmacist, raised her and her much older brother, Stanley.

She attended college at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, where she met and “married the big man on campus,” Walter Pershing Blake, a veterinary student and football, basketball and track athlete.

They married in 1941, the day after Walter Blake graduated from Colorado State. He taught veterinary medicine and surgery at the University of Missouri, and then the couple moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where he had a small animal clinic. Marion worked in the practice with her husband as surgical assistant and girl Friday.

Moving to Seaside to be closer to family, she adjusted to circumstances after the loss of her husband and two daughters. She found a



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Marion Blake, right, with her daughter, Mary Blake, at home in Seaside in 2018.

happy home with her daughter Mary, living an active lifestyle well in her 90s and beyond.

“Marion Blake was an avid golfer, before age caught up with her,” Chelsea Gorrow wrote in a 2014 profile in The Daily Astorian.

“She now uses a cane with four feet to get around. But that’s the only visible sign

that she’s 96 years old. The petite and fit woman wears glittery nail polish, stylish white-framed glasses, pink lipstick and gold jewelry, including a beautiful bangle bracelet and fashionable rings.”

At 100, she did stretching exercises every day, and weighed the same as she did in college. Her busy

schedule included duplicate bridge at the Astoria Golf & Country Club, at the Bob Chisholm Community Center once a week and twice a week in Astoria at the senior center. She continued to sip an occasional dry “martooni,” which, she said in an interview with the Seaside Signal two months before her 100th birthday,

“was good for partying.”

Marion loved football and cheered for the Denver Broncos. She watched Rachel Maddow and Stephen Colbert. She went to bed at 1 a.m. and woke up at “6 or 7 ... I don’t waste a lot of time sleeping too much,” she said.

Last year she professed a desire to be a police detective, and the Seaside Police Department drove up to make her a dream come true with an honorary badge.

Marion lamented that she was “always the oldest one in the crowd,” and said she had no regrets over the years. At age 100 her goal was to “just play more bridge and kick butt.”

She achieved a wish of living her last years at home. “Heaven forbid assisted living!” she said. “You know, there are a lot of old people there.”

Marion regretted that the coronavirus pandemic reduced her bridge-playing and was “heartbroken” by

the U.S. Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6.

“She did feel that after the (Biden) inauguration we would make our way back to a more truthful and connected society,” Mary Blake said. “She was especially excited to see the first woman of color become the vice president.”

She wants her mother’s message of positivity to survive her. “There wasn’t a day that went by that we didn’t thank our lucky stars that we had each other’s company. We were at home safe, healthy and blessed all the way to the end. Murder watched as her generation was so vulnerable and that they went through such an unimaginable lonely and painful crossing, without family holding each other close and heart to heart.

“She would always sign off with ‘Happy trails to you,’” she added. “‘Aloha, xoxo — moi.’ Please, always remember to love your mother.”

BRIEFS

Applications invited for grant funding

Seaside is now accepting tourism grant applications for the 2021-22 fiscal cycle. Up to \$50,000 in grant funds are expected to be available.

Those with a proposal encouraging overnight stays in Seaside between July 1 and Dec. 31, 2022 are encouraged to apply. The application deadline is May 7.

For more information, visit the city’s tourism grant program webpage.

Last year this program funded:

- Seaside Chamber of Commerce, Pouring at the Coast Brewfest; Sunset Empire Park and Recreation Foundation, Art in the Park ... Naturally and Virtually; the Seaside Downtown Development Association, Halloween Happenin’s; Seaside Museum and Historical Society, Lewis and Clark Salt Makers and Seaside Prom Centennial Photo Exhibit; North Coast Land Conservancy, CoastWalk Oregon; and Knights of Columbus, Oktoberfest.

‘Handle With Care’ addresses childhood trauma

A new initiative, “Handle With Care,” partners local school districts and law enforcement agencies in an initiative to support children who experience traumatic events.

When law enforcement encounters a child at the scene of a traumatic event, the child’s name and three words, “Handle With Care” are communicated to the child’s school before the school bell rings the next day. This enables teachers and school personnel to offer

support, rather than discipline to a student. For example, the teacher might provide extra help with coursework, refer the child to the school counselor, be flexible with deadlines or delay or reschedule exams or projects.

The initiative protects the child’s privacy as no details of the traumatic event are shared with the school.

Handle With Care is presented through Columbia Pacific CCO and the Resilient Clatsop County network, to prevent and heal childhood trauma and build family resilience. Partners include

the Oregon State Police, Clatsop County Sheriff’s office, Seaside, Gearhart, Astoria, Cannon Beach and Warrenton police departments and the Seaside, Astoria, Jewell, Knappa and Warrenton-Hammond school districts.

For more information, contact Angel Escobedo at escobedo@careoregon.org.

Master gardeners seek applicants

The Clatsop County Master Gardener Association is accepting applications for its

annual scholarship program.

Awards up to \$1,000 will be granted to one or more high school seniors who reside in Clatsop County and whose further education at college, university, vocational school, or training program will help them develop skills that contribute to the advancement of sound gardening practices.

Applications can be obtained by contacting high school counselors’ offices, downloaded at www.clatsop-mastergardeners.org/CCM-GA-Scholarship, via email at lindabrim@gmail.com, or 503-325-0916.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

TUESDAY, FEB. 16

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., www.seaside.k12.or.us/meetings.

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., work session,

cityofseaside.us.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 17

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., cityofseaside.us.

THURSDAY, FEB. 18

Seaside Transportation Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., cityofseaside.us.

MONDAY, FEB. 22

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., cityofseaside.us.

TUESDAY, FEB. 23

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, regular meeting, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A.



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