

An American hero continues to serve others in Seaside

Lou Neubecker flew on Marine One with two presidents, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. As flight crew and hydraulics instructor, he held a key role in the U.S. Marine Corps squadron responsible for the transportation of the president, vice president and top government officials. “I was the man saluting them when they walked off,” he said.

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



R.J. Marx

Lou Neubecker, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, is busy with volunteer work in the community.

Neubecker, 73, grew up in San Francisco. His grandfather served in the army in Italy and his father served in World War II in the U.S. Navy.

On his 18th birthday, he got his draft notice. “I said, ‘Hell no, I’m not going into the Army,’” he remembered.

Instead, he went down to the Marine recruiter, signed the paperwork and headed to boot camp in June 1967.

Attending aviation school, he became a hydraulics instructional mechanic in Marine helicopters.

He was sent to Camp Pendleton in October 1968 and then to Vietnam. Only 35 days later, flying an operation as a machine-gunner, the helicopter he was flying in got shot down.

“We were supposedly in friendly territory,” he recalled. “We were taking live fire from the tree line. And it hit, from what I understand, the main transmission and we auto-rotated down. And I don’t remember too much after that. I was in the hospital for 18 months.”

Neubecker was evacuated from Vietnam for medical care back in the United States.

One of his vertebrae disks was cracked. He had no feeling in his legs and he was unable to walk.

Neubecker doesn’t remember what happened, but he got sent home and received

a medal for valor in helping others in the chopper to safety.

“They were all fine — hearsay, because I don’t remember — supposedly I pulled everybody out,” he said.

Neubecker won’t talk about the specifics of his medals, but this was only one of many he received over his military career, including a Purple Heart, which is awarded to soldiers who are wounded or killed.

After a period of physical rehabilitation, he had the chance to take a medical discharge but opted to remain in the service.

He was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro before being sent back to Vietnam — this time assigned not to helicopters but to fixed-wing aircraft as a hydraulics and structural system specialist.

“There were five of us that were helicopter guys,” Neubecker said. “They called us the ‘Sergeants Five’ because all five of us were helicopter guys. We didn’t have a clue

what we were doing on the fixed wing.”

He was stationed in the South Vietnamese stronghold of Da Nang. He remembers the day when 34 bombs weighing 500 pounds each were dropped mistakenly by five American warplanes on the giant American and South Vietnamese air base at Da Nang in January 1973.

“First night we were there, they put us up in the barracks. We were walking in to the flight line the next morning and all of a sudden it was like watching a World War II movie. We’re hearing this whistle. ‘What the hell is that?’ And all of a sudden bombs started hitting,” he said. “The Air Force was leading a raid on North Vietnam and they missed. They were bombing the base in Da Nang.”

Neubecker returned to the U.S. later that year and was stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station in New River, North Carolina. He later served aboard the USS Guadalcanal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Volunteer seeks yes vote for Gearhart fire bond

As a 15-year veteran of the fire service in Arizona before moving here, I will be voting “yes” for the Gearhart fire bond.

I have carefully reviewed the arguments against. They all show a dangerous lack of understanding of the physical needs and realities of emergency fire and police operations, as well as the realities of the impact a natural disaster will have on our local communities.

Complaining about the location and its distance from downtown ignores Gearhart’s growth and where that growth will continue to happen. It says you think the lives and property of Gin Ridge residents and downtown are more important than those living off Highlands Lane or the streets west of U.S. Highway 101.

Most important, it ignores the primary factor that impacts response times: where the majority of the volunteer force currently lives and will continue to be drawn from in the future. Spoiler alert — it ain’t “downtown.”

Opponents claim to “support” emergency service personnel; but, all they can see is the cost while,

ironically, their continued opposition keeps driving the cost up. A “no” vote will cause taxpayers to pay as much or more to get less in the future and has the potential to expose the city to civil liabilities.

More important, they are denying Gearhart fire and police the basic necessities they currently need to safely and effectively do their jobs. Nothing in the fire bond proposal is extravagant or unnecessary.

A “yes” vote is the fiscally smart thing to do.

Bill Graffius Gearhart

out there. I stopped by the fire station one day and took a tour. I then realized I needed to educate myself with facts beyond the social media wars.

Some complain we are not being told the whole story. The whole story is out there, and I urge anyone to seek out the facts.

Being fiscally conservative, I feel it’s important how we spend tax dollars. They’re not asking for a new golf course. They are asking for a place to train and learn, and to serve their community.

I urge you to be open minded and get the facts from reliable sources. Attend a Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department open house and get to know the situation firsthand. I urge you to vote “yes” on Measure 4-213.

Trudy Duisen Gearhart

Yes or no?

Yes means a modern, efficient and earthquake-resistant Gearhart fire/police station. Yes means placing critical infrastructure on high ground out of the likely tsunami inundation zone. Yes means adequate space for equipment storage and first-responder training. Yes means decontamination areas and adequate changing facilities in compliance with today’s standards. Yes means secure storage for police evidence and private spaces for victims reporting crimes.

Yes means providing basic infrastructure and tools for our fire and police to do their jobs. Yes means supporting our volunteer firefighters who sacrifice time with their families to respond to our emergencies. Yes means safety and security for residents and visitors. Yes means coming together as a community to do good things for the good of Gearhart.

What does no offer? Nothing. Join me in voting yes on Measure 4-213 for a new Gearhart fire/police station.

Bebe Michel Gearhart

Highlands Lane offers safer option

Gearhart Ordinance 924, the tsunami overlay zone ordinance, was signed into city law in August 2019. It prohibits building critical infrastructure, such as fire and police stations, schools, hospitals, in the inundation zone as long as there is an option available that is a safer, better location. That safer, better location is at Highlands Lane.

Holding on to hope of building at the current location does nothing but work at delaying an inevitable process. And that process is building at Highlands Lane. Delays only lead to increased costs, as evidenced by the lawsuit brought against the

City last fall, challenging the wording of the bond at that time. The judge dismissed each point challenged. That law suit cost all of us, the taxpayers, a minimum of \$600,000 and up to \$1.5 million in increased costs due to time lost. What a blow this senseless lawsuit has been to taxpayers!

Let’s stay focused on building a modern new fire/police station at the viable and sensible Highlands site. Let’s also consider how the existing site can be utilized to create a more vibrant downtown. We can have the best of both worlds. Downtown activity, but a resilient police and fire station that can help us get back on our feet when disaster hits.

Please join me in voting “yes” for measure 4-213.

Jeanne Mark Gearhart

Let’s pass this bond

Recently, Lisa and I had a fire at our home in Gearhart. We have struggled with the loss of a secure home and feelings of displacement. The bright side has been getting to know our wonderful neighbors. It does not matter if you have a red or a blue sign. We are one community, and we are all fortunate to live in Gearhart.

Our fire station is in need of replacement. If you doubt this, visit the fire station and make your assessment. Please inform yourself of tax implications. Gearhart pays some of the lowest property taxes on the north Oregon Coast. Ask your Astoria and Seaside neighbors about their taxes. You will discover you pay less, and you will continue to pay less after this bond is approved.

In today’s world, it is easy to be a pessimist. But pessimists don’t accomplish anything. I have lived in this community for over 20 years, operate a successful local business. Success and growth take investment. Each year we defer this critical project its costs increase. If we do not pass this bond, we will be voting on a significantly more expensive bond in the future.

Our volunteer fire department is an incredible asset. We can’t build a school or a city hall and staff it with volunteers. But we can build a fire station and depend on volunteers to come to our rescue. As a community, let’s pass this bond, build the fire station and once again enjoy each other’s company.

Dave Koller Gearhart

Gearhart volunteer firefighters need a new station

Gearhart is changing. The North Coast is changing. What used to be a quiet coastal

corridor has seen such growth, it still takes my breath away.

Our population has grown, traffic on the 101 corridor has grown, and tourism has grown. These changes bring increasing demands to our first responders. We must build a facility to respond effectively to these times.

The Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department has been working out of a decaying cinder block structure built sixty-four years ago. The current station has served them well. Well beyond what should have been its expiration date. Now is the time to build for both the present and all of our futures. Our Gearhart volunteer firefighters need a new station.

We must stop procrastinating. Costs continue escalating. In 2006 a bond measure for a new station failed. Its cost? \$3.75 million. Labor and supply costs continue rising every year. What will the cost be if Measure 4-213 fails?

In the last sixty plus years we have become aware of greater earthquake and tsunami threats. Higher ground and a new station will help mitigate and manage these realities. The proposed Highlands Lane location is at 70 feet in elevation. This is above even a worst-case scenario. Our current station at 27 feet might just be underwater with even a medium event.

For a safer future we must build a new fire station. Let’s quit kicking the can down the road.

Vote yes on Measure 4-213 for a safer tomorrow.

David Russell Gearhart

Thompson deserves your vote for county commission

It’s time again to vote I have some thoughts on the upcoming election for District 5 on the Clatsop County Commission. As I consider my choices and what my experience has been with the county staff and management.

I must say that in all my experiences, while not always to my preferred outcome, I have been treated with respect and courtesy, which I believe to be a direct reflection of the leadership.

When I have called to talk to my elected official Lianne Thompson she’s always responded and helped direct me to the appropriate staff for my problems. Based on her past commitment to the county for excellent government and her institutional knowledge of how best to make our government work for balance for all, I would encourage your support for her on the May 17 ballot.

Michael Kapigian Elsie/Vinemapple

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