

Sandy Delaney retires from Channel Lodge

By Bill Reynolds

Sandy Delaney has built two homes in La Conner during more than four decades here. One is her actual residence, the other a rock-solid career with the La Conner Country Inn and Channel Lodge.

Delaney officially retired Friday from the local hotels, truly her second home, after 42 years on the job.

Make that, jobs. Delaney began in housekeeping in 1978 at the stylishly designed Country Inn, which opened on Second and Morris streets a year earlier. It replaced small and aging wood-frame cabins, one of which had been infamously spray-painted with the misspelled moniker "Town Getto."

Before long Delaney moved to the front desk and then on to bookkeeping, advancing over the years from pencil and paper accounting to managing new computer software programs.

"Sandy's primary attributes," Country Inn and Channel Lodge partner Rick Thompson told the Weekly News, "have always been loyalty and precision."

Those traits go well beyond job performance.

Delaney, who is visually impaired and does not drive, is often lauded for having faithfully walked to work daily in all kinds of weather.

"If it was cold or rainy," said Channel Lodge general manager Jane Schmidt, "she would bundle up and walk over the hill to work."

Delaney was a natural to go into bookkeeping, Thompson said.

"She was upset if she was ever a penny off," he said with a chuckle. "My background was in banking and in that business if you were within five cents, you called it good."

Delaney was literally on the ground floor when the Country Inn, still in its infancy, became the go-to place for a slew of celebrities who stayed overnight in La Conner.

Basketball legend Wilt Chamberlain was a Country Inn guest. So, too, was veteran actor Jim Davis, then at the peak of his career portraying Texas oilman Jock Ewing on the popular TV series "Dallas."

The original Batman, Seattle's Adam West, also lodged there. Same with then-Governor John Spellman and Washington Secretary of State Ralph Munro, Thompson and his wife, Reinhild,



RETIREMENT IS A GREAT REASON TO SMILE – Sandy Delaney brought her husband Les to the Channel Lodge last Friday to share in the celebration of her retirement. The longtime bookkeeper called it quits after 42 years.

– Photo courtesy of Channel Lodge

recalled.

It was only fitting that Delaney, a skilled seamstress, would serve as a common thread binding together a span that saw La Conner evolve from a remote and sleepy village to a globally recognized tourist destination point.

Delaney had been on staff just over a decade when the Channel Lodge opened amid much fanfare on the La Conner waterfront, assuming a major presence along the North First Street shoreline.

As times changed, she kept pace, according to Schmidt, who has known Delaney since childhood.

"She had to learn all the new technology," Schmidt said. "She had started off doing the P & Ls (profit and loss statements) the old-fashioned way. So, she locked herself in the office to learn all the computer programs."

Not that Delaney focused on mastery of digital accounting methods to the exclusion of other roles.

"She always chipped in wherever she could," Schmidt said of the mother of two, a grown son and daughter. "Her work ethic has been incredible."

Delaney could be counted on to help plan employee Christmas parties with her handmade ornaments adorning holiday trees in the hotel lobbies. Over the years she delighted co-workers, family and friends with hand-crafted birthday cards and expertly sewn dresses and garments.

Windstorm

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ly and figuratively, that made restoration of electrical service so challenging, according to the PSE website. The regional energy company posted that steady rainfall prior to the storm saturated soils, making trees and power poles less able to withstand the high winds. Downed trees and electrical wires created dangerous conditions that slowed initial damage assessments and responses.

"We understand how difficult it

Lights out for 2,000 area PSE customers

By Bill Reynolds

Nearly 2,000 Puget Sound Energy customers here lost electrical power after last week's major windstorm that swept through.

"It looks like at the peak of the outage we had 1,981 customers in the La Conner area impacted by damaging winds on January 13 around 12:30 a.m.," PSE Media Engagement Program Manager Andrew Padula told the Weekly News on Tuesday. "Most of those customers were restored by 7:40 p.m. the next night, with a number of smaller outages being restored through Saturday afternoon."

Winds registering nearly 70 miles per hour blew through western Washington, felling trees and power lines, and resulting in road closures and loss of electrical service to homes and businesses.

The gusts were so powerful they blew a truck onto the railing of Deception Pass Bridge, 15 miles west of La Conner, closing the iconic span for three hours.

More than 500,000 homes and businesses in the Puget Sound area were without power – about half PSE customers.

The PSE electric and natural gas service area covers 6,000 square miles, extending from Puget Sound to Kittitas County.

is to be without power," the PSE website said, "especially with so many of our customers working from home and/or navigating remote learning."

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Police Chief Earl Cowan provided confirmation.

"Crews are actively working in several areas of the reservation," Cowan said on Thursday. "Some of the work had to wait until daylight for proper assessment of damage and safety of the work crews."

One priority area was Reservation Road, which was for a time closed to traffic near its 'Y' intersection with Snee Oosh Road, due to a downed tree.

Loss of power disrupted daily routines from meals to being able to take hot baths and showers.

"Until the power is restored," Swinomish resident and Weekly News contributor Robin Carneen said, "I'm eating up my cereal, so my milk won't spoil. We have our fridges plugged into a generator so we might be okay."

Residents of the Pleasant Ridge area, where power poles were damaged on Summers Drive and Rexville Grange Road, reported heading into Mount Vernon for dinner at drive-thru restaurants, or to La Conner for take-out meals.

Restoration of electrical service did not solve all problems. In a few cases, new ones emerged. Resulting power surges reportedly fried electronics and control modules on household appliances.

Overall, though, local residents were thrilled to have their lights back on and life returned to some semblance of normalcy as the weekend drew to a close.

"After 83 hours without power," Charlie Edwards of Swinomish said, "I can finally do all the things I love – dishes, laundry and going to the bathroom in my own house."

Enter contest by Jan. 22

Luminary kits at MoNA for virtual Illuminight

Go to the Museum of Northwest Art now and pick up your free luminary globe kit. You have until midnight Friday to enter your home-made luminary in the Skagit Watershed Council's seventh annual Illuminight Winter Walk taking place virtually 6 p.m. Jan. 29.

Anyone can enter. Categories are family, child, teen, adult, and advanced (designs more complicated than the "Simple Star"). The kits have supplies to make a globe-style luminary. Virtual instruction are at sites.google.com/view/luminateskagit/home.

The luminary-making contest is a new feature this year.

COVID-19 restrictions prevent having the Walk in downtown Mount Vernon. The annual Illuminight Winter Walk, a public procession of luminaries (paper lanterns) is the last Friday in January.

Contest winners will be announced at the Illuminight January 29. There are prizes.



No fines . . .

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seeking tools for violations of the governor's mask wearing rule.

Leibrand said Commissioners received a lot of emails against the ordinance, some of them threatening. The Board made its decision before the Jan. 6 Capitol Building insurrection, he said, and while the underlying threat did not have much to do with the decision, "the whole attitude behind the insurrection had something to do with it."

He reflected that "a confrontation (with an unmasked belligerent person) is so much more risky" for possible spread of the novel coronavirus than ignoring an unmasked person in a public place.

"We really haven't lost anything that we currently have," he said, "but we toned it down a bit, turned the heat down a bit." Leibrand pointed out that Skagit County has one of the best compliance rates in the state, and the state has a good compliance rate. He noted that La Conner led with its ordinance last spring.

Leibrand and Johnson agreed that Public Health priority was now on vaccinating county residents. Johnson said in the release, "As we shift to focusing on vaccinations, it's important that Public Health builds trust and support within the community over all else. I agree with the Board's decision."

"As long as we can get more vaccine we have another method to protect people," said Leibrand.

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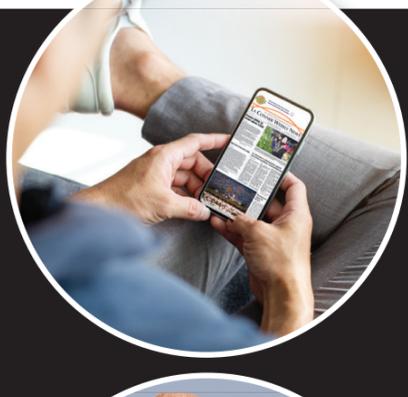
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