

CHINOOK
OBSERVER

MATT WINTERS
Editor and Publisher



EDITORIAL&OPINION

“The Observer has come to stay, and it won’t take water from anything that wiggles.”
GEORGE HIBBERT | OBSERVER Founding Editor, Dec. 28, 1900

WINNER OF THE 2020 WASHINGTON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

EDITORIAL



LUKE WHITTAKER

A dumpster fire ignited near the Bolstad beach approach was quickly contained by the Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department. We can’t count on averting disaster forever.

Time has come to rein in fireworks noise, chaos

Old-fashioned fun shouldn’t go on so long

In his boyhood (and later when having a child still at home provided a plausible excuse), the editor was wild about fireworks. Back in the 1960s when firecrackers were universally available and every kid with a few dollars could be an amateur explosives expert, much fun was had (and more than one friend’s fingers were permanently injured).

So it is with no sense of moral superiority or wish to be a spoilsport that we urge a sharp curtailment of personal fireworks here on the coast. This past July 4 holiday — which as usual stretched across eight days — provided a vivid illustration of the ways in which a patriotic party has descended into a too-long, too-loud and too-toxic excuse to misuse our pristine beaches and otherwise quiet neighborhoods for a dangerous free-for-all.

Thanks to hard-working professional and volunteer first responders — aided by minor precipitation — we didn’t suffer the major conflagration that pyrotechnics could have sparked in dry beach grass and shore pines. Speak to almost any firefighter and they will say that a blaze in our dunes, driven by a brisk north or south wind, is perhaps our most likely catastrophe — far more likely in any given year than a tsunami. Such a wildfire in this time when many houses have been built along the western shore would cause enormous property damage, threaten loss of human life, and certainly kill and injure countless wild animals. We have only firefighters and dumb luck to thank for having avoided such a disaster.

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Beyond this worst-case scenario, even an ordinary Independence holiday — along with the less-riotous fireworks period at New Years — causes great suffering to people, pets and wildlife. Hours of loud explosions from all directions, drifting clouds of hazardous smoke, and an aftermath of litter and waste all are unpleasant for everyone — and downright traumatic for some.

The editor and his friends in city and county government have been remiss in kicking this can down the road too long. We too soon forget the downsides of Wild West levels of July 4 revelry and put off for another year some reckoning with how to better control holiday crowds and their mischief. We recognize that selling fireworks is an important source of income for some local individuals and civic groups, while Pacific County’s and Long Beach’s reputation as a last bastion of fireworks freedom draws a larger crowd of customers to local businesses.

But eight days, even in a time of heightened fire danger? That’s ridiculous.

The county once again blew past a legal deadline to give itself authority, even in emergency circumstances, to curtail fireworks use. So the soonest it can have such power is year after next. Officials have indicated they will set the wheels of red tape in motion to be able to do so — as they should.

Beyond the mere authority to ratchet down fireworks in some special circumstance, the time has arrived to

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We’ll be watching Walsh

Interviews with holocaust survivors and eye-witnesses are the most chilling chapters of my 55-year career as a reporter and historian. I can still hear the horror in Arnold Samuels’ voice as he described helping liberate Dachau, where emaciated bodies were stacked like cordwood and mounds of ashes in the ovens were still warm. At 91, the Ocean Shores retiree closed his eyes, held his head and made a low keening sound — an anguished “Awwwwwww” — as the memories flooded his brain. He handed me a stack of photos he took at the concentration camp in 1945. “People need to see them,” he said. “But they give me nightmares. I just couldn’t visualize how a cultured nation could do that to other human beings.” The utter depravity of it

seared Arnold’s soul — and mine. Arnold, his brother, father and mother were among the fortunate Jews who escaped Germany before the Nazis began shipping boxcar loads of Jews to the gas chambers. Arnold and his friend, Henry Kissinger, were among the “GI Jews” who returned to Germany to help track down the SS monsters who presided over Hitler’s “final solution,” the liquidation of 6 million human beings — Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, gays, brave Christian clergy like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the developmentally disabled, the mentally ill and others considered “Untermenschen” (inherently inferior) by the Third Reich.

I was also privileged to interview Henry Friedman, who helped establish the Holocaust Center for Humanity in Seattle. As a teenager,

Henry evaded the Nazis in a barn loft. Christian farmers risked their lives to hide him, his mother, his brother and a teacher. When his hometown of Brody, Poland, was liberated, only 88 of its 10,000 Jews had survived.

Now comes the news that State Rep. Jim Walsh, R-Aberdeen, wore a yellow Star of David patch during a speech to alleged “conservative” activists in Lacey to dramatize his opposition to covid-19 vaccine mandates. “It’s an echo from history,” Walsh reportedly wrote on a Facebook page. “In the current context, we are all Jews.”

The concept of “context” apparently was beyond Rep. Walsh’s comprehension. In the beginning, the Nazis forced Jews to wear the infamous patch to make them

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COLUMN

Moving, mortifying grade school memories

By LEISA JENNINGS
Observer columnist

We lived just down the street from Chauncey Davis Elementary and South Bend’s old brick high school. I saw Brakeman Bill in the auditorium stage there. He demonstrated making a cornstalk out of a rolled up newspaper by fraying the edges with scissors. We all went home and tried it.

My birthday falls in the beginning of September, so I had just turned five when I went to afternoon kindergarten. I took the school bus that first day teeth chattering with fear. My teacher was Mrs. Combs. She seemed ancient to me. I liked her the first week, but after that I was very apprehensive and didn’t trust her. This was after myself and a few classmates had gathered at the sprinkler drinking fountain. We were seeing how long we each could gargle water when we were told to sit down. Innocently, I filled my mouth and sat down to continue gargling. I know, gargling? Hey, we were kids. Suddenly, I felt a slap across my face so hard it almost knocked me out of my chair. I wanted to sink through the floor in embarrassment, oblivious as to what I had done wrong. I was suspicious of her from then on, ready for her to belt me one at any time. So when I was out for a bad case of the flu for two weeks and Mrs. Combs hugged me upon return, I thought she must be real two-faced. Of course she hated me, I thought; she had slapped me. I never forgave her. I was shy and didn’t like school.

For picture day, my mom fixed my hair with a defined “hump” in the back. I thought I looked pretty swell in my pastel striped dress with a bow at the waist. When it was my turn, I thought I would just sort of grin rather than smile big, you know, play it safe. I was horrified when the pictures came back. I was certain that everyone would see how awful and ugly my picture was and make fun of me. Because of that I crammed the pastel dress in the corner floor of my closet and never wore it again, for fear some-



Almost everyone has a favorite teacher — for Leisa Jennings, Mrs. Kirby.

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one would remember my picture in that dress. I confiscated any copies of the picture I found and crumpled them under my bed. Finally, they stopped appearing to torture me. Years later in adulthood, I found the only copy of the torn picture and paid \$50 to have it patched up professionally. Cutest pic ever. What was I thinking?

I got through the traumatic kindergarten year and entered into the 1st grade with Mrs. Nyberg. She wore

her gray hair in a French wrap, neatly tucked in. She told the class that her name was Mrs. Nyberg and that her husband’s name was Mr. Nyberg. I thought that was the most hilarious thing I’d ever heard and couldn’t wait to tell my mom. Mom, guess what? Guess what Mrs. Nyberg’s husband’s name is? Tee hee... *Mr. Nyberg!!* Rolling on the floor laughing now. Mom looked at me calmly and explained how it works when someone marries and takes the other’s name.

We were asked to file to the lunchroom in pairs holding hands. You were to hold the hand of the person seated nearest you. I was horrified to find that my walking partner was going to be Elroy Thompson, a boy! The lunches at South Bend were phenomenal and all homemade. I loved pizza day. My favorite, however, was the dressing on the green salad. It was a type of French dressing and everyone raved about it. So much so that my mom finally got on the horn with the cook, Della Taylor, and asked her for the recipe. It was so simple and I think everyone that went to Chauncey Davis Elementary keeps a homemade jar. Equal parts vinegar, oil, sugar and catsup. Dash of cloves and salt. We call it “Della” dressing to this day and

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CATE GABLE

The Willapa Bay Interpretive Center, a hidden treasure at Port of Peninsula, is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Last Thursday, the volunteer docents gathered to prepare: (top row left) Al and Judy Franklin, Celsa Johnson, Eva Bareis, Glen Ripley, Cris Wiegardt, Kathy and Ken Olsen; (front row left) Bud and Ethel Runyon, Cody Wiegardt.)

Revisiting, restarting, and reopening on the Peninsula



COAST CHRONICLES
By CATE GABLE

Revisit getting vaccinated

It’s official folks. The Delta virus is the predominant version in the United States now — meaning over 50% of the covid cases are attributable to this variant. It’s more virulent because it duplicates itself much more quickly in the human body; it’s therefore more contagious and may result in more dire physical problems. Covid hot spots in the country are areas where vaccination rates are low. In other words, those who are unvaccinated are the primary vectors for spreading this more dangerous form of the virus.

I asked Katie Lindstrom, director of Pacific County health and human services, if we have the Delta virus in Pacific County. She said, “That’s likely. There is virus sampling on a weekly basis in Washington, but not every county is sampled. It’s sort of haphazard. But we do know that the Delta variant has shown up in our state.”

Let’s applaud our healthcare workers who did such a stellar job of getting early vaccine doses into peoples’ arms in Pacific County. We are far ahead of many other counties in the state. “When we first started our vaccination program, there was a giant rush that lasted through March,” Lindstrom said. “It started to taper off in April, and by May our vaccination rate was down significantly.” As noted in a recent *Chinook Observer* (tinyurl.com/June-30-Covid-Update), Lindstrom and her team are developing more convenient ways to vaccinate people who may not have made it in to the high-volume clinics in those early days.

“We’re working with the county health department nurses and several school nurses who have some free time to create a once a week pop-up clinic,” Lindstrom continues. “We need vaccination sites that are super convenient for people, like at the Saturday Market [Ilwaco] for instance. The group we are mostly down to now are the anti-vaxxers — and I don’t think we’re going to be able to convince many of them.”

Can I just say there is really no excuse for not getting the free vaccination, unless you have a 2021 death wish. If you’re pro-life, get the vaccine! Some are even calling covid a “sickness of choice” since the vaccine makes it close to 95% preventable. If you haven’t gotten vaccinated yet, you’re providing another body for the virus to use to replicate itself in more lethal ways — basically that puts you on “Team Virus” instead of “Team Human.” You’re endangering yourself

and the people around you. In Washington 62.4% of our population have had at least one dose; 55.9% are fully vaccinated. States with the lowest vaccination rates have the greatest threat of covid. Transmissibility and caseload are highest in Mississippi (30% of people vaccinated), Alabama (33%), Wyoming (35%) and Arkansas (34%). These states have three times as many new covid cases as states with higher vaccination rates. Arkansas has 17 new daily cases per 100,000 people; whereas Vermont (with 66% vaccinated) has only 0.4 cases per 100,000. The data is clear. Let’s keep Pacific County safe. We don’t want to have to close down again. And, just a reminder, if you haven’t been vaccinated, for your own and others’ safety, please wear a mask.

Restarting, a musical community meet-up

In the good news file, free summer concerts at Cape Disappointment have started again: 7 p.m. for three more Saturdays — July 24, Aug. 14 and 28 — at the Waikiki Beach lawn and outdoor amphitheater.

We lost an entire summer of these feel-good gatherings during shut-down. I have fond memories of a group of eight to 12 friends and I making portable food, hauling tables, ice chests, and an easy-up tent to the grounds to enjoy the beachside entertainment. The music varied from decent to fabulous. Dancing happened. Huge bubbles bobbed around. And it was community meet-up time.

I heard from pod-member Steve Kovach that last Saturday’s Cape D show, the first in the new series, “was great. It was the Hackles from Astoria and there were between 75 and a hundred people there. It got a little chilly — they played for an hour and a half with no breaks — but we loved it. I talked to Ranger Steve Wood who started everything off by welcoming the crowd back. He was pleased so many people came out. We also talked about getting some volunteers together to protect [refinish] the wood benches. I guess they had to replace the whole stage this year because it rotted out.”

The next concert is July 24. Get ready for some Afro-Cuban rhythms when Neftali Rivera and Grupo Borikuas take the (new) stage. Bring your dancing shoes for this one. Complete schedule and links to the music groups: tinyurl.com/5a3z87ef.

Reopening a hidden treasure

A dedicated band of volunteers gathered last week to get reoriented and prepare for the reopening of the Willapa Bay Interpretive Center at Port of Peninsula in Nahcotta. (Turn right off Sandridge at 273rd, pass Jolly Roger Oysters and park.) Cris

Wiegardt was there to go over the details of the center; he also gave a short talk on the clamming industry on the bay.

“Oystering usually gets all the publicity, but my favorite thing on the bay is the clam industry,” Wiegardt said. “The oystermen didn’t really care much about the clams, but in the ‘70s — I was nine in 1974 — there were six of us kids who took turns picking up clams our dad raked. I can remember harvesting as many as 450 pounds in one tide. Dad shipped them all down to markets in San Francisco. I think that was the first time anyone considered clams to be a valuable product. In 1995 I started a clam business — we dug about 89,000 pounds of clams a year and when I retired we were up to 120,000 pounds.”

After several questions from the volunteer crew, Cris also talked about the state of the bay. “There is so much ground being lost to burrowing shrimp up at Stackpole. It’s so infested that they can’t grow oysters on it anymore. Some of the oyster clients are having to be rationed.” Cris noted that “once they put dams on the Columbia River things changed, and the shrimp populations exploded.” He also mentioned that one of the new features of the Interpretive Center exhibit is a pictorial timeline about oyster hatcheries.

This center is really a small but mighty museum — a hidden treasure. Noted local historian Nancy Lloyd was among its primary early organizers. There’s a video of oystering on the bay; a beautiful wall-sized mural/map of Willapa Bay and environs; tons of historical photos of local fishermen and fishery scenes; a roster of all the local oyster companies that have existed over the years; and lots of shellfish-related artifacts. When visiting Sunday, I met five women just arriving to explore; one of them had heard about the center from a friend in Long Beach. Truly, it is one of the best kept secrets on the bay.

The center will be open through Labor Day, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m. through 4 p.m. If you’re interested in helping this band of Interpretive Center docents spread the word on all things shellfish, give Cris a call at 360-244-5241. And, by all means, if you haven’t ever poked your head into this informational gem, stop by and see for yourself what a fine example of local history it is.

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The long eight days of fireworks from June 28-July 5 were tough for our first responders and for many residents. Let’s not let this be forgotten and slip issues under the rug before we have an honest community conversation about what we want our beach to look like for future Independence Days. Get in touch with me if you’d like to discuss: categable@gmail.com.

far at this time, decreasing the discharge period would still bring fireworks fanatics to the county, but do so in a concentrated period that would permit bringing in extra law enforcement personnel, as was long the practice during Rod Run. On balance, our area’s outstanding popularity since the onset of the pandemic demonstrates that our greatest draws are spectacular scenery, rich history, welcoming neighborhoods, peace and quiet. We must focus on preserving and enhancing these qualities, not on placating rowdy noisemakers.

ANIMAL SHELTER REPORT



Tabitha



Sabrina

The beauty and magic of black cats

By CORY MCKEOWN
For the Observer

Last week we featured charming sisters Sabrina and Tabitha, two one year old black kitties, and sadly, no one stepped up to offer them loving homes. It is a sad reality that in shelters across America, black pets, both dogs and cats, are the last to be adopted, and sometimes the first to be euthanized.

Part of this sad fact is due to the lingering superstitions concerning black cats. These superstitions arose during the Middle Ages, and were associated with witchcraft. Luckily for our feline friends, these ridiculous superstitions have virtually vanished and black cats are now a part of many families across the world.

In several countries, black cats are cherished, including Ireland where they are considered good luck, and in Japan, where they are considered a symbol of prosperity. People who own black cats, myself included, treasure our “house panthers” for their beauty and personalities. Many black cats have some Siamese heritage, and inherit their quirky personalities and behaviors, such as playing in water and enjoying traveling with their owners. Currently, we have in the shelter three black adult kitties hoping to show their new owners just how wonderful black kitties can be.

Outgoing, affectionate and “chonky” Annie was featured in a previous Shelter Report, but unfortunately did not meet her person. Annie is six years old and came to us as a stray. She resides in our free range “Jungle Room” where she loves to be the first to approach visitors for pets and attention. She would be a wonder-

ful companion for a person who loves an affectionate, responsive and attentive kitty. Tabby and Sabrina are very outgoing and affectionate, and would do well adopted into a family with kind children, or to single people wanting a loving kitty companion.

In order to help our three black beauties find their forever homes, some of their fans at the shelter have sponsored their adoptions, meaning they can go without cost to their new owners. Our usual adoption screening criteria will apply. If you think you can help these kitties get out of the shelter and into a home where their wonderful personalities will be appreciated, go to our website beachpets.com and follow the instructions under “Adopt.”

We have a lot of kittens in foster care and the shelter, including some cute “mini panthers,” who will soon be available for adoption. Watch our website, beachpets.com as new available kittens will be posted there.

Updated summer hours

Note that the shelter is now open Tuesday-Thursday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and that we have extended hours, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

We are open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday by appointment only for adoptions and surrenders. Stray drop-off, spay/neuter vouchers and pet food program are available during open hours.

View our available cats and dogs and submit an online application at our website beachpets.com. An approved adoption application is required before scheduling a meet and greet with your selected animal.



Kitten



Annie

JOYCE LANG PHOTOS

Editorial

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seriously cut back on the length of time they can be discharged. Even the strongest critics of them would probably find it to be at least somewhat tolerable if fireworks were limited to perhaps 12 hours on each July 3 and 4 — as opposed to the current 110 hours of legal discharges between June 28 and July 5. And this doesn’t count the additional hours of illegal explosions that are largely beyond the capacity of law enforcement to control.

If, in the face of certain pushback from some, elected officials simply won’t throttle back fireworks, they should at a minimum do as the Fire District No. 1 chief has urged and take steps to limit chances for a peninsula-sweeping wildfire. Although some measures might be costly, it’s worth reflecting that a clever lawyer could make a potentially convincing argument that the county and cities should be held financially liable for firework harm they were amply warned about. As opposed to an outright ban, which we think would be a step too