

3550





ED PARKER
Co-Editor



REESE BERMAN
President

Thriving for 10 years is rare for publications founded in this death of journalism age. 3550 is pleased to have retained the support of readers and advertisers necessary to stay in business for that long, including through the transition from the founding editor to new leadership. Nancy Moss and I, your current editors, are pleased that an all-volunteer staff of retirees continues to provide new issues every quarter.

Mirabella residents are an amazingly talented bunch of people. Our magazine provides a showcase for the writers, editors, designers, photographers and artists living here. The donation of their time and talent is an amazing gift.

The 10-year milestone is a time for looking back and forward. This issue includes a guest article by founding editor Steve Casey recalling the first 10 years. Also included is a photo essay showing one cover picture from each year with a brief note about some of the items included in this sample of issues.

A copy of each print edition is delivered to each resident mailbox. An electronic copy is posted on the internet at www.3550magazine.org. The online version allows residents to read the magazine on their computer screens and permits their friends and relatives to read the magazine from anywhere in the world.

Residents interested in looking at past issues may do so in the Mirabella library, which has a complete collection. All of the back issues are also publicly available free on our website to anyone with access to the internet.

Looking to the future, we plan to continue entertaining and informing residents while displaying the talents of our creative volunteer staff.

The ad hoc activities director research committee was scheduled to present its report at the RAMP Council February meeting. The members of the committee, Bob Hopkins (chair), Rosemary Hole, Kim Batcheller, Sandy Foreman and Lester Reed, evaluated comments from more than 50% of our residents and gathered information from Mirabella staff, RAMP officers, committee representatives and people at other retirement facilities.

They concluded that a new activities director position should not now be added at Mirabella Portland. Their reasons are in the report. The committee devoted many hours to the task. They deserve our appreciation and thanks for taking on this challenging job, regardless of how we may feel about their recommendation.

Part of their conclusion stated that the duties of an activities director could be satisfied by "a combination of improved utilization of existing staff, better resident participation and implementation of updated and clear procedures ... without the substantial costs and related increased resident fees that would be required to add an activities director position."

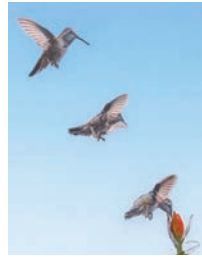
I would like to address the phrase, "better resident participation." We at Mirabella are a community, not guests on a cruise ship or a hotel. We rely on residents to volunteer and participate if they are able, as we relied on the ad hoc committee members to research the activities director issue and on the chairs of RAMP committees to take on leadership positions. If we want trips, programs, musical evenings, parties, events, discussion groups and a variety of activities, then we need to volunteer and become involved. Our administration is here to help but it is we residents who create a vibrant and active community.

Don't wait to be invited to join a committee or to help with an event. There are many opportunities to become an involved member of our Mirabella community. Please volunteer — or say "yes" when you are asked to do something. RAMP needs you.



Front Cover

Maintenance tech Gerald Matthews and engineer Duc Tran check out the 31st floor pumps that circulate water from heating and cooling units in resident apartments. Photo by Robert French



Back Cover

3550 photographer Stan Berman set his camera to take continuous high-speed images of a hummingbird on his Mirabella deck. Three images were combined to create this composite picture simulating the motion. Photo by Stanley Berman

~ The Inside Scoop ~

4 In the News

Employee Appreciation; Museum Honors McPeak; Vacant Lot Used; Moss Play Performed; Grocery Store Coming; Fire Drills Are Back; High-Definition Channel 1981; Refinancing Delays Merger; U-Haul Vehicle; Kent Liebelt; Resident Assistance Fund; Dining Improvements; Ukelele Group

10 3550: The First 10 Years

Steve Casey

17 Mirabella Resident Endured POW Camp

Nancy Moss

18 Our Changing Health Care

Nancy Moss

20 City Government Struggling to Change

John Foreman & Ed Parker

22 Resident Profile: Mona & Jim Fitzsimmons

Pamela Lindholm-Levy

26 Our Neighbors: Children and Mice

Pamela Lindholm-Levy

28 Staff Profile: Richard Gomez

Priscilla Cowell

30 The Biggest Company in Portland You've Never Heard of

Pete Swan

32 Puns: the Lowest/Highest Form of Humor

Rita Brickman Effros

34 A Portland Treasure

Johanna King

35 My First Airplane Ride

Ed Parker

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Best Employee Appreciation Ever

When **Mirabella employees** opened their pay envelopes on Dec. 2, they found a special thank-you from residents — a share of the \$439,745 raised for the annual Employee Appreciation Fund (EAF). That was the largest amount ever raised for the fund, exceeding the \$375,640 raised last year.

All full- or part-time employees, except for eight people in senior management positions, received a bonus based on the number of regular hours worked in the previous 12 months, not including overtime. Each of 179 employees received slightly more than \$1.75 per hour worked. Employees who worked full time over the previous 12 months received \$3,658.

A resident EAF committee, chaired by Carol Sandler, began the job of motivating residents to donate months before those early-December paychecks. The six committee members, assisted by other residents and staff members, began with letters and flyers explaining the need for the EAF. New residents received a special letter. In early October a second letter emphasized the mechanics of giving including the tax-saving method of donating directly from an IRA or other retirement fund.

As the fund began to grow, business office coordinator Safija Babia updated the total. A thermometer graphic, with artwork from Hebe Greizerstein, appeared outside the post office as a visual reminder of the fund's progress. Carol attributes the success of the campaign to the creative energies of committee members E. J. Finneran, Mona Fitzsimmons, Bettianne Goetz, Gwen Luhta and Janet Schmitt.

OHSU Using Vacant Lot for Contractors

Have you noticed new activity on the vacant waterfront lot next to the dog park? Have you worried that a new high-rise building will block your view of the river?

Have no fear. Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) Vice President Michael Harrison has assured 3550 that OHSU, which owns the lot, has no current plans for a permanent structure on that lot.

OHSU does have construction going on at its Marquam Hill location and is using its vacant South Waterfront property as a parking lot and staging area for contractors. The current temporary building is used as a test site to make sure building components connect properly.

Aviation Museum Honors McPeak

McMinnville's Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum has awarded Mirabella resident Merrill McPeak its first Icon award. Barry Greenberg, the museum's secretary-treasurer, said, "Merrill has made such a positive impact on aviation during his Air Force career and on technology in his post-Air Force corporate career," that he has brought "honor to Oregon."

The museum, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary of acquiring the Spruce Goose, the largest wooden airplane ever built, is the home of more than 50 military and civilian aircraft and is Oregon's second-biggest tourist attraction.



Photo: Robert French

McPeak Award

Moss Play Performed

Chapel Theatre in Milwaukie performed Nancy Moss's 10-minute play "Elevator Therapy" as part of its festival of short plays in January. Rich Rubin's "Stark Naked" was another of the plays on the program.

The Mirabella Players presented "Elevator Therapy" in their August 2022 program. They have performed a number of Rich's and Nancy's plays.

Grocery Store Coming to South Waterfront

Alamo Manhattan, with two buildings now under construction in South Waterfront, is committed to a third building with a full-service grocery store, its president, Matt Segrest, told 3550.

Construction will start in 2024 for a third building on the property on Bond Avenue adjacent to the Spaghetti Factory parking lot. It will have more than 22,000 square feet of grocery space on the ground floor. The grocery entrance will be at the corner of Bond and Abernethy. Loading docks for delivery trucks will be on River Parkway. Underground parking will be available for grocery shoppers.

Alamo Manhattan is not releasing the name of the grocery store chain because attorneys are still wrestling with a structural detail having to do with a merger but is confident the grocery store will happen. River Parkway has been paved with blacktop to the site of the third building. Water, sewer, electric power and gas lines for the building have been designed.

The adjacent six-story apartment building on Bond Avenue will be ready for occupancy beginning this June, Kevin Larkin, project manager for the project's contractor, Anderson Construction, told 3550. Drywall has been installed on floors 2, 3 and 5. Cabinets were delivered in late

January. Internal elevators began operating in mid-January. The tower crane on that building has been removed. Its shaft will be filled with concrete.

The tower building overlooking the river is scheduled for completion in December of this year. They were up to level 17 of the planned 24-story building in early January. Window and fascia installation continues and had reached level 9 by early January. The windows are embedded in prefabricated floor-to-ceiling panels that are installed as a unit. Concrete has been poured for the first of the Greenway observation decks on the property.

At the river's edge, those embedded tree trunks — complete with roots — will serve as fish-friendly habitat. While they are sometimes above river level, they should be under water much of the time. Water levels are subject to up-stream dam releases and 4-foot tidal variations. (Yes, tides affect the water level here.)

When finished, the project will connect the current South Waterfront Greenway Park with the Greenway path running southward from the Spaghetti Factory to the Sellwood Bridge. It should be attractive for both human and marine life.

- Pete Swan

Fire Drills Are Back

After a long hiatus, fire drills are back at Mirabella Portland.

A drill was held for floors 9, 10 and 11 in December and for floors 12, 13 and 14 in January. More drills will be scheduled until all floors have had fire drills. After that, drills will be regularly scheduled so people become comfortable with what to do when they hear an emergency alarm.

Mirabella Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee (MEPS) chair Paul Knoll says the delay in resuming fire drills was because the previous automated alarm announcement told people to evacuate the building. That caused problems for some people with mobility or health issues who attempted to follow the evacuate instruction. It took several years for regulatory authorities to give Mirabella approval to change the message.

The new announcement asks people to go to their designated locations. For healthy mobile people that is typically to gather in the elevator lobby of the floor three floors down.

People should go further down if an alarm is ringing on the designated floor or access is restricted on the third floor down.

Residents with health or mobility issues may optionally shelter in place. Emergency team leaders on each floor should instruct residents on how to shelter safely in their apartment, unless, of course, the fire is in their apartment.



High-Definition Channel 1981 Replaces Old Channel 981

Comcast has been slow to implement an agreement to provide better television service to Mirabella residents. Once completed, residents should have a wider choice of TV channels, better quality on our in-house channel and other improvements. All at no direct cost to residents.

Most TVs throughout the building now have updated digital cable boxes with the ability to record programs for later replay and remote-control units that permit channel changes with voice commands. However, more than a dozen units were missed by the Comcast subcontractor who changed the cable boxes.

Mirabella Facility Services Director Kent Liebelt told 3550 that the Comcast master control unit for the building cannot be upgraded to provide all the promised new features until all the cable boxes are swapped out because the services are not available on the old cable boxes.

The low-quality channel 981 has been replaced with a new high-definition digital channel with a new channel number, 1981. A second high-definition local insert channel will also be turned on, so exercise classes will not have to be cancelled to accommodate other programming.

In addition to Comcast's limited basic and digital starter channels, the new service will include the Comcast sports entertainment package. That package has more than two dozen sports channels and includes PAC-12 college sports and professional football, baseball and hockey channels.

Because the channels are under a master contract with Pacific Retirement Services to serve many PRS communities, residents should be getting only a zero-balance bill from Comcast for the TV services. Residents will get the no-payment-required bill because they will still have the option to buy pay TV and other services from Comcast if they want services not provided in the new expanded Mirabella contract.

By inclusion in a Comcast contract for services at multiple communities, PRS was able to get better rates than individual customers could get. Services are "free" for Mirabella residents because the costs are included in monthly fees.

Mirabella can make no promises about how long it will take for Comcast to deliver the services they committed to provide under the new contract.

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Refinancing Delays Foundation Merger

Mirabella Portland's parent company, Pacific Retirement Services (PRS), is refinancing the debt that paid for the building's construction. An improved credit rating and an option to buy out the current bond debt created an opportunity for Mirabella to get a better interest rate on the remaining debt before interest rates go higher.

That process caused a delay in completion of the merger of the Mirabella Portland Foundation with Mirabella Portland and the revision of the bylaws of the Residents' Association of Mirabella Portland (RAMP).

Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton told 3550 that implementing the merger before the refinancing was completed would trigger a requirement for a post-merger test of the bond compliance terms. Sharon said that Mirabella would meet all the terms, but the process would delay the refinancing. With interest rates heading upward, a delay would not be desirable.

Sharon said there was no legal problem with the merger itself. It will only be delayed by a few months.

The RAMP bylaw revision vote, which was originally planned for the March semi-annual meeting, includes the changes required by the Foundation merger. RAMP president Reese Berman told 3550 that the resident vote on the bylaw changes therefore would be delayed until the September annual meeting.

U-Haul Vehicle Drains Pool

If you are a swimmer, you may remember the incident late last year when the pool unexpectedly drained.

The cause was a lesson for families of Mirabella residents on how not to help them move their things. Names will be withheld to protect the embarrassed parties.

A U-Haul vehicle with a height larger than permitted on the parking-area ramp came down anyway and had to be turned around to get back out. In the process, the truck broke an overhead pipe that caused the pool to drain.

Residents who were waiting for valet staff to move their cars commented on how the valet staff calmly dealt with the emergency while completing their regular duties and keeping everything under control.

Maintenance staff took advantage of the unexpected opportunity to clean the pool before it was refilled.

Lesson learned.

Kent Liebelt: Facilities Head Coach

If there is one overriding theme to Mirabella's new facility services director's approach to the job, it's teamwork. Kent Liebelt views his role as that of a head coach. His team, with whom he meets daily, consists of leaders in maintenance, valet services, technology and housekeeping.

After meeting his assistant director, Rick Thompson, and facility manager, Brittany Horn, he often starts his day by checking in with his team before heading to the Bistro for breakfast. Kent believes getting to know the residents of Mirabella is a major part of his position and the Bistro is a good place to start.

As a new director (he started in November 2022), Kent is becoming more familiar with the building. On a typical day, he might do a "walkaround" with his staff to see "what needs doing" to keep Mirabella at its high level of maintenance. As he gets to know the building, he can better evaluate and recommend what needs to be done. His friendly, outgoing manner suits his desire to interact with residents from all sections of the building.

A large part of the job is financial stewardship of contractors called in for special work and assisting in budgeting for ongoing jobs. Kent has longtime expertise in construction and remembers watching as Mirabella was being built. His most recent job was in a similar director's role for a local hospital. He is a "poster person" for multi-tasking.

When asked about plans to integrate the independent living residents' emergency response plan with the administration's emergency response plan, he explained that the plans for the healthcare floor and assisted living are mainly determined by state requirements. As an example, he explained, there is a chain of command required by the state for skilled nursing care. Certain mandated supplies are not required for independent living.

"If there is an emergency, we are all in it together," Kent emphasized, "and we will work as a team with many of the same components." His goal is to integrate staff and resident responses and for them to be complementary. The state requires a certain number of fire drills, emergency drills and plans for natural and man-made disasters. Once a year, the state also requires a hazard vulnerability analysis. The facility director's role, as Kent sees it, is to integrate and act as a liaison between staff and independent living residents' emergency responses.



Photo: Richard Mounts

Kent Liebelt brings a varied background to his new position of facility services director.

The job is 24/7, according to Kent. As an example, he cited an occurrence on a Friday early in his tenure. It was the weekend when he literally "got his feet wet." A pipe accident required that the swimming pool be cleared and drained while at the same time the heating and cooling equipment on the second floor malfunctioned. All hands were "on deck" and the situations were resolved.

Kent recently remarried and lives with his wife and 16-year-old Australian rescue dog in Milwaukie. His two daughters from his first marriage, ages 16 and 20, live with their mother, although the older girl is in college. Kent came to the Northwest from the Midwest 24 years ago. When spring comes, he plans to commute to work on his Triumph motorcycle. He hikes and enjoys photography and all things "mechanical."

To sum up his goals as a facility services director, Kent wants to provide leadership and direction to his team, in order to make Mirabella what the residents and staff deserve to have: a safe, comfortable environment to live and enjoy life. "If we can't make that happen," he says "we are not doing our job."

- Dorothy Dworkin

Resident Assistance Fund Supporting Residents

When the Mirabella Portland Foundation began asking residents to donate to the resident assistance fund, some skeptics said it would never be needed. They believed that Mirabella Portland only admitted rich folks who could afford to live out their lives here.

Those skeptics were wrong. Since September 2022, the fund has been paying out more than \$12,000 per month to cover Mirabella fees for residents who have run out of money. More distributions from the fund can be expected as the similar-aged cohort of then-younger people who moved into Mirabella 10 or more years ago shortly after it opened continues to age in place and develops age-related medical conditions.

The skeptics were right about the statistical average because most residents will never need assistance. However, the few outliers in the statistical distribution of age and health are the ones who need help.

As that relatively young cohort of original residents has aged, Mirabella's population includes a larger percentage of people in the older and poorer health categories. As a result, Mirabella's health care floor is becoming more of a long-term care facility and less of a short-term skilled nursing facility.

There are three primary reasons why residents may run out of money and become eligible for support: longevity, health-care expenses and investment failures. Running out of money after giving it away doesn't count. Mirabella's residence and care agreements say, "Mirabella Portland shall have no obligation to give you any financial assistance if you have impaired your ability to meet your financial obligations by making gifts or other transfers."

Outliving their money could be a problem for some residents. If you could afford to live here to age 100 and actually live to 110, the last decade could get expensive, especially if inflation drove up costs without increasing your savings. Many, perhaps most, Mirabella residents are likely to outlive their actuarial life expectancies. Aren't we, like the children of Lake Wobegone, all above average? The number of Mirabella residents in their 90s and 100s exceeds those under 80. The average age is 85.

Unexpected medical expenses that are not covered by insurance could create problems for some residents, especially

if one member of a couple is in independent living and the other has the higher expense of long-term care on the second floor. That situation could come close to tripling the previously anticipated costs of Mirabella residence. One resident asked, "Couldn't federal Medicaid dollars be used to defray some of those costs?" The answer is currently "no" because Mirabella is not licensed to accept such payments.

We hope that nobody loses savings to a financial scammer or that a financial crash doesn't cause problems for some residents with riskier investment choices made while attempting to keep up with inflation. But it could happen.

Other skeptics of the need for the resident assistance fund correctly point out that the first line of defense is to borrow money from Mirabella secured by refundable entrance fees. Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton confirmed that no moneys are drawn from the resident assistance fund until that borrowing power is no longer available.

Others point out that our residence and care agreements imply that Mirabella will take care of us if we run out of money through no fault of our

own. That is true. But where would Mirabella get the money to cover the costs? Neither Mirabella nor its parent company, Pacific Retirement Services, has a fund somewhere to cover those costs. The costs would be covered, if necessary, by raising fees for those residents who could still afford to pay.

The good news is that, despite the skeptics, generous Mirabella residents raised close to \$790,000 for resident assistance before the first residents needed support. As of December 31, 2022, the resident assistance fund had \$755,654, down from its earlier peak.

The bad news is that monthly disbursements continue to reduce the balance. If the current monthly disbursement from the fund tripled, the fund would run out of money in about 20 months.

Residents who can afford and choose to make tax-deductible charitable donations to the resident assistance fund may be helping to protect their own uncertain future and would certainly protect the rest of us from the risk of higher fees that could happen if the fund ran out of money.

- Ed Parker

Three reasons:

Longevity,

medical costs,

investment loss

Dining Improvements Happening

Tired of eating out of brown bags and plastic containers? Don't lose hope for better dining options. Help is on the way.

At the Jan. 26 "coffee social" meeting with directors via Zoom, Human Resources Director Renee Chan sounded more optimistic about staff recruiting and retention than in previous months. We are still short of full staffing, but things are improving. She encouraged residents to be welcoming and supportive of new staff members as they learn their jobs here.

Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton announced in mid-January that newly-hired dining director, Chris Handford, will start work at Mirabella Portland on Feb. 13 after completing training at Mirabella at ASU. Pacific Retirement Services (PRS) corporate director of culinary service, Todd Albert, will provide support for Chris as he takes over direction of Mirabella Portland dining operations.

In late January, Todd, who was a former executive chef and much-loved director of dining services at Mirabella Portland before promotion to his current position overseeing dining services at all PRS facilities, announced a major change in dining operations, effective Feb. 7.

The Aria 24th floor restaurant will be open for dinner service Monday through Saturday from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. without prior reservation. Seating priority will go to those with reservations, so others may need to wait until tables (or waitstaff) become available. Adagio will be open for Sunday dinner. The Bistro will continue to be open for breakfast and lunch.

Todd asked the dining committee at its January meeting which venue should next be reopened for Monday through Saturday dinner service, Adagio or the Bistro. The committee gave him a clear answer: the Bistro.

Dining advisory committee chair Jane Wachslar said that

she is pleased with the way members of her committee have provided constructive advice. She says that working with Todd "has been a delight." She says she is "feeling very positive" about the current dining transition plans. She said Todd is responsive to suggestions. Jane said that at the request of the committee Todd promised that ice cream should soon be back on the dinner menu.

Jane said things may not go smoothly at first as the new dining team and staff work through the transition. She said she is optimistic that we will be happy with the outcome at the end of the transition.

Ukelele Group Founded

Mirabella residents have organized a new "what do we do for fun?" group. Their tongue-in-cheek pretentious name is the Ukelele Orchestra of Mirabella Portland.

Their current repertoire is limited to "Happy Birthday" but they hope to soon expand to include "Glow Worm" and "You are My Sunshine."

The group's world premiere was on January 12, 2023, at the party to celebrate residents with January birthdays. They plan to perform at future birthday parties and in Willamette Hall at 10 a.m. on the second Friday of each month as part of the Allied Arts event.

The group was organized by Judy Seubert with help from Yvonne Branchflower, Rosemary Hole and Bettianne Goetz. Judy told 3550 the group now has 12 members. Others are invited to join. Contact any of these four residents for more information. Musical talent or prior experience is not required.



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3550: The First 10 Years

By STEVE CASEY *Founding Editor*

Once upon a time, there was life at Mirabella without 3550 Magazine.

And when the magazine started a decade ago, it was such an impertinent undertaking that it was predicted to fold after two issues, max.

Well, here we are on issue 41, wrapping up the first 10 years, having survived or embraced format changes, the comings and goings of magazine staff members, new editors and constant turnover in the employee side of the Mirabella family, including changes of executive director and several department heads.

In the wider world, Portland also has lived through a pandemic, the resignation of the state's governor, a pervasive homeless problem, homegrown riots, a now moribund imaginative plan to bring passenger ferries to the Columbia and Willamette rivers, a Columbia River \$140-million bridge design by people who apparently forgot ships need to sail underneath, the happy life of the Portlandia television show, wholesale changes to city government, along with the nationwide political divisions and threats to democracy that this country never before had seen.

Much of that wider world has been covered in the pages of this publication.

It was my pleasure to start this magazine and run it for eight years. It was my honor to work with an extraordinary band of enormously talented folks who kept the pages full and the finances tidy.

Along the way, we won a crateload of awards, but the real prize was offering up the magazine every three months to residents who appreciated both the effort and the product. Ten years in, with lots of new readers, is a good time to review the 3550 mission.

That mission was never to be an official publication, presided over and directed by Mirabella. It does not exist to serve the marketing interest of Mirabella or Pacific Retirement Services.

3550 was created as an independent voice, adding context and enrichment to Mirabella life, showering praise when due and never shying from criticism when deserved. It is aimed at, and goes to bat for, the residents.

About that: We're fortunate to have had two executive directors who are mature and secure enough to respect 3550's independence, even when they are being taken to task. Both Anthony Sabatini and Sharon Van Eaton have been 100% supportive, even when the PRS folks in Medford got twitchy about something we published. The strongest pushback I remember hearing is Sharon's "not my favorite issue" comment

after we jumped on administration for one thing or other. That's maturity, often rare in the corporate world.

Over the years, 3550 has grown in size, sophistication and stature. Through reader support and the dedication of its staff, the magazine continues to improve each year.

At the magazine's five-year mark, I noted that the generous array of talent inside the 3550 building allowed the publication to start in a manner that was eerily like the "Hey, gang, my uncle's got a barn; let's put on a show" story of a Mickey Rooney film or two.

We discovered we had writers, superb photographers, experienced editors, designers who understood the tools of modern magazine layout, locals who knew the ad market and people brimming with creativity.

Wonder of wonders, we all pulled together and got this enterprise running. For 10 years the heartbeat of the magazine has been "do a gutsy, professional job and have a great time doing it."

Five people listed on the masthead of our first issue are still actively working on the magazine — Nancy Moss, Bob French, Ron Mendonca, Judy McDermott and John Branchflower.

Each was and is a vital part of the magazine's success and each deserves our thanks.

As readers, you provide ideas and feedback . . . and cash.

We insisted from the beginning that readers had to have some skin in the game, something that would justifiably invest them with a sense of ownership. So roughly half of the operating cost of the magazine has, historically, been provided by RAMP — the Residents Association of Mirabella Portland. Think of it as your subscription. The rest of the funds come from ad sales, which is why you are often pitched to "support our advertisers."

RAMP was part of the magazine's birthing process. The idea emerged from the RAMP communications advisory committee, which successfully lobbied the RAMP council for the initial budget to pay for resident subscriptions. But, just as 3550 is independent of Mirabella administration, it is independent of other RAMP actions and does not hesitate to comment freely with praise or blame when appropriate. There are challenges awaiting, to be sure, but the future is rich with promise.

Nancy Moss and Ed Parker have taken leadership of 3550 as co-editors, now that the bum who first ran the joint has disappeared. 3550 should bring you great things in the decade ahead. ●



Photo: Todd Albert

The premier issue of 3550, dated June 2013, included a staff profile of maintenance engineer Duc Tran and a photo essay of Mirabella's construction from empty lot to finished building.



Photo: Robert French

2013

The Aug/Sept 2013 issue, with a cover picture of Mirabella resident dragon boat paddlers Anne Clark and Barbara Short, included a resident profile of Muriel and Ron Mendonca and stories about the not-yet-completed Elizabeth Caruthers and South Waterfront Greenway parks.

2014

The December 2014 issue had a cover picture of Mirabella Players actors Don Marshall, Dot Lukins and Norman Bengel and featured stories about the refinancing of Mirabella Portland's debt and the availability of end-of-life options at Mirabella.

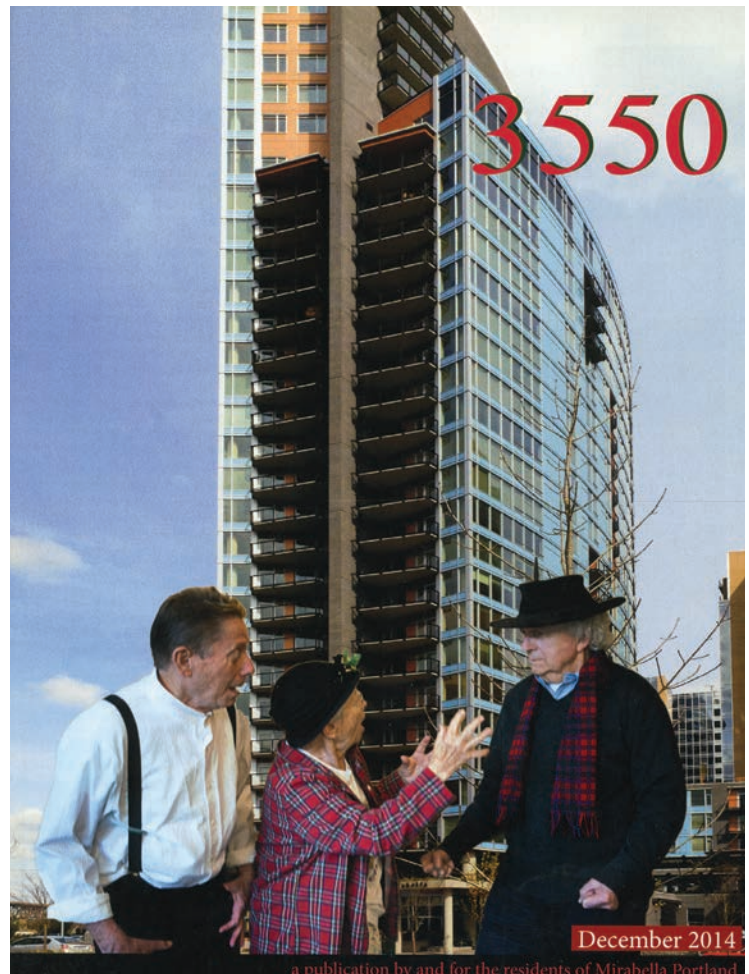


Photo: Ron Mendonca



Photo: Robert French

a publication by and for the residents of Mirabella Portland

2015

The December 2015 cover featured residents Toni Tidman and Bob Ivey in the Mirabella woodshop. Bob had donated his woodworking equipment to share with other residents. The issue included profiles of residents Bill and Cornie Stevens and staff member Rick Thompson.

2016

The March 2016 cover was a painting by resident artist Bill Stevens and included stories on OHSU's South Waterfront building construction plans and on South Waterfront preparations for post-earthquake resilience.

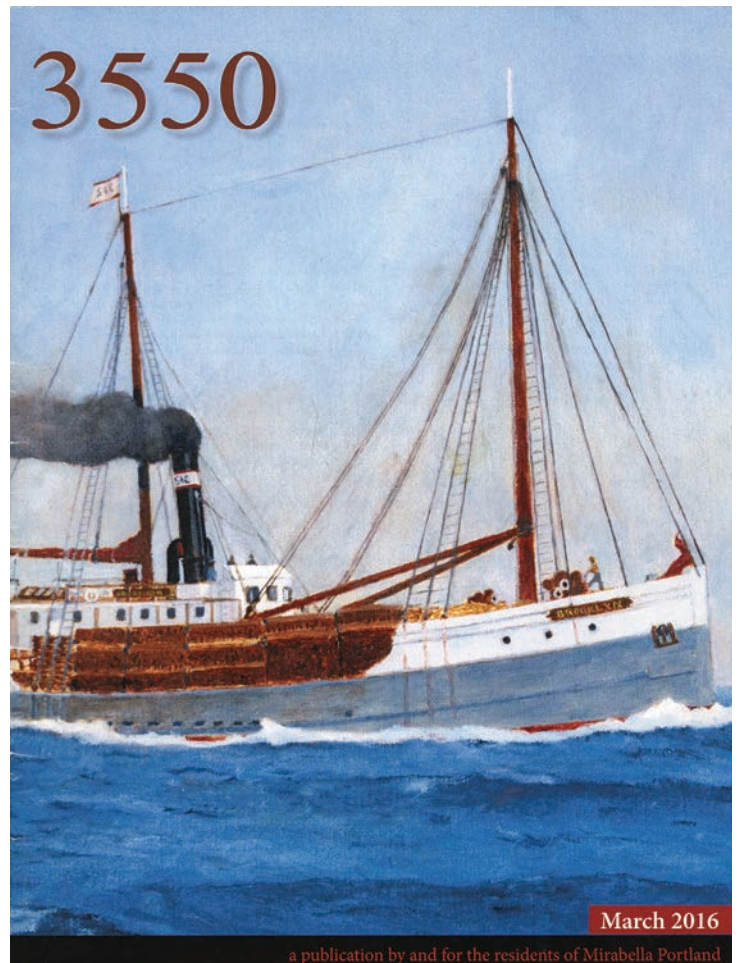


Photo: Ron Mendonca

a publication by and for the residents of Mirabella Portland



Photo: Robert French

2017

The December 2017 cover featured residents Stan Tidman and Rosie Batcheller learning from tai chi instructor John McKinney. Stories included a profile of senior valet John Lahodney and a story about resident and Auschwitz survivor Frieda Grayzel.

2018

The September 2018 issue included a staff profile of Christina Dye, then concierge and now executive assistant to Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton, and a cover picture of her riding her bicycle in the neighborhood. Residents Dan and Rosemary Hole were also profiled in that issue.



Photo: Ron Mendonca



Photo: Robert French

2019

The September 2019 issue included a feature story on “The Secret Life of Pronouns.” The cover showed dining room servers Elyssa Chen and Kai Hobbs wearing their gender pronoun buttons.

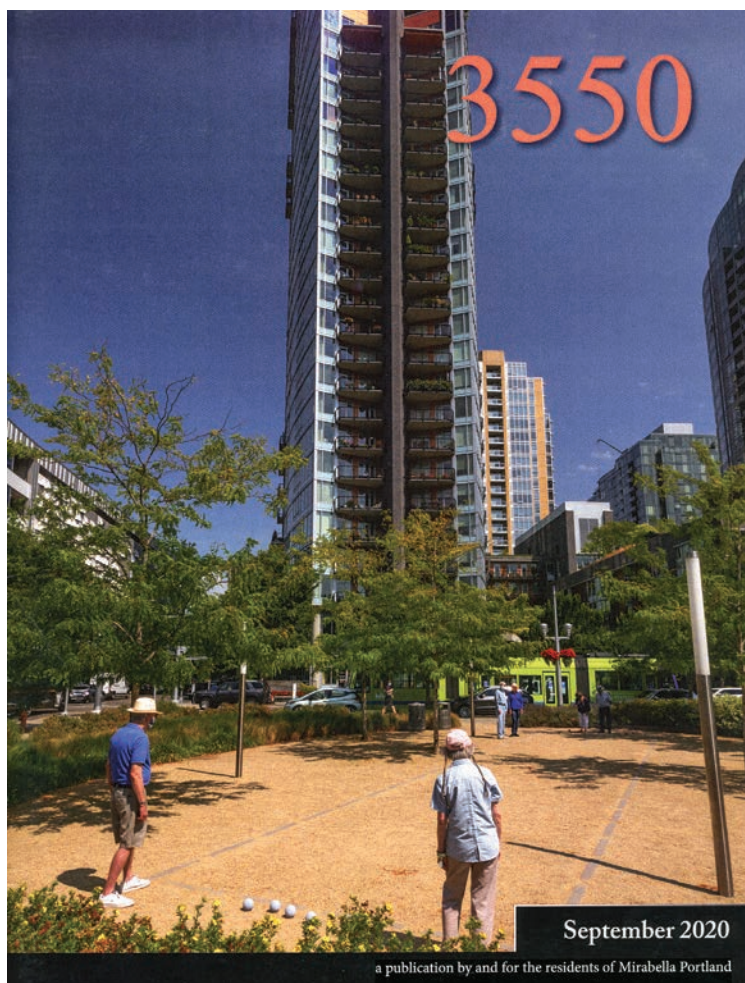


Photo: Robert French

2020

The September 2020 cover showed residents playing bocce ball at Elizabeth Caruthers Park. The content included a profile of resident Ralph Merrill and stories about Portland protests and police responses becoming national news.



Photo: Robert French

2021

The June 2021 cover showed resident John Toppel, masked, riding his bicycle past springtime cherry blossoms. In addition to a profile of residents Lynda and Richard Mounts, the content included articles describing and critiquing an earlier version of a foundation merger proposal. That led to a revised plan that achieved near-unanimous resident approval a year later.

2022

The March 2022 cover featured the newly remodeled Bistro with resident Sylvia Mathews ordering from server Maria Reyes. In addition to profiles of resident Frank Parker and house-keeper Sherry Davis, the content included a story on how Facebook and Google are spying on us.



Photo: Robert French

Mirabella Resident Endured POW Camp

By NANCY MOSS



George Wallace, as he looked when attending Portland's Grant High School before going into the army.

Mirabella resident George Wallace, then a private first class in the U.S. Army, arrived in Europe during World War II too late for the Normandy invasion, joining the war during the advance through Germany.

In the Ardennes, George was with a small group of soldiers when the Germans shot their officer, who was out exposed in an open space. The wounded officer returned to his

men, showing the Germans their position, and surrendered the unit.

After their capture the men walked for two days, spending one night in a barn, and George developed the frostbite and sores that plagued him in captivity.

During the six months George was a prisoner of war in Stalag 4B in Muhlberg, Germany, his weight dropped from 165 pounds, on a 5-foot11-inch frame, to 115. He remembers watery vegetable soup and bread. "I was always hungry," he says.

The camp contained a couple thousand men, George remembers, many of them Englishmen, who oversaw the distribution of food. They were billeted in an old officers' quarters, which also contained hidden bottles of wine. "We stole a lot of wine from the Germans," George says, adding that although he "did partake," he did not steal any.

The English POWs managed to get news of the war, which they shared with the other prisoners.

George remembers one time when they had the job of carrying 20-pound boxes from one place to another. When the prisoner in front of him staggered under the weight and could not continue, a German civilian took over from him, saying that he wished the war was over.

Months after his arrival, the Russians liberated the camp. "They didn't pay any attention to us," George says. Frostbite and sores on his feet kept George from walking to the American lines, 12 miles away. Finally, some Americans came through in a truck and took him to a hospital, where George spent the next 11 months until his feet healed.

His war took a while to end. ●

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Our Changing Healthcare Floor

By NANCY MOSS

If we picture American healthcare as a train, insurance is the engineer driving it. Asked if Mirabella's health-care floor is losing money, Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton says yes, because with more patients in memory care and fewer in skilled nursing, there are "more expenses, less income" largely because there is "not as much reimbursement."

Sharon sees Mirabella's healthcare future as demanding "strategically creative choices," as in the shift in memory care licensing from skilled nursing to residential, which will cut back on restrictive regulations and result in substantial savings. Oregon's Department of Human Services, however, has taken longer than expected to authorize the switch in a process Sharon calls "frustrating."

The cost of long-term or memory care, presently \$10,000 to \$11,000 a month, depending on the number of days in it, will fall to about \$8,000 a month, Sharon said, once memory care receives a residential license.

If red tape were gold, our health care floor's fiscal problems could be easily solved.

At present, "skilled nursing is a dying breed," Sharon says. Stephanie Cook, Mirabella's health services administrator, says Medicare's projected changes in coverage would send people directly home from a hospital instead of to a skilled nursing facility. "We need to be advocates" of skilled nursing, Stephanie says. Mirabella is a member of LeadingAge, a community of non-profit aging services providers, that hopes to influence Medicare. Sharon says that being part of LeadingAge enables her to make Medicare policy suggestions.

Patients who rely on home health care after surgery or a hospital stay will have to take on more of the burden than they do now. Not only will they have to pay for the service, but they will also need to evaluate their own care. Mirabella has no oversight over outside businesses providing home health care.

"That scares the hell out of me," one second-floor patient observes. Sharon says a "long-term dream" is for Mirabella to have its own long-term home health service.

Major changes like the ones Medicare are considering can be challenging for an individual to follow. Sharon mentions slogging through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's 600-page report. People not used to the terminology would likely find it a foreign language.

One change Sharon sees in our healthcare future would be a regulatory change to permit extended assisted living services that would permit residents to stay in assisted living longer.



Photo: Robert French

RN Anna Kimich works at the health floor's med cart.

For instance, a patient requiring assistance from two people to transfer from bed to chair or back could stay in assisted living, which is not permitted under current licensing rules.

It is clearly mind-boggling for an individual to keep up with these changes. Anyone with long-term health insurance should check to see if the policy covers home health care.

Meanwhile, life on Mirabella's health care floor goes quietly on. Geri Abernethy, a recent patient there, mentioned her "great care," which included "competent doctors." Stephanie says that OHSU's Dr. Emily Morgan's team of doctors "oversees skilled nursing" there, especially if a patient's primary-care doctor is away. "They're invested," Stephanie says.

Geri praised Mirabella's administration for being "in her corner" during a protracted conflict with her insurance company.

Like any complex operation, Mirabella's healthcare floor faces some challenges. Two patients mentioned a lengthy wait after pressing their call button, stressful when they needed to use the bathroom. A staff member said the the aim is to

answer a patient's call within 10 minutes. That can seem like a long time to a patient in distress.

One employee called post-Covid staffing challenges a "perfect storm" in the kitchen and dining room as well as patients' rooms. "Food is not just food," that staffer said about patients with special needs. A good meal can provide comfort.

Long ago, a doctor used to be a kindly family practitioner who visited the patient's home. What he — and it was always a "he" — prescribed might be useless or dangerous, a medication containing alcohol and/or opium, but he knew and could comfort the sick person and the family. Modern medicine, with its state-of-the-art tests and "team" of doctors, some of them possibly strangers to the patient, is more complex and impersonal. Insurance, with its arcane rules and emphasis on the bottom line, makes the recovery process even more daunting.

Keeping up with our health care is a continuing challenge.



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City Government Struggling to Change

By JOHN FOREMAN & ED PARKER

Riding a wave of negative public opinion about the quality of life in Portland and the ineffectiveness of the Portland City Council, more than 58% of voters last November approved a change to a new form of government.

Voters approved the Portland City Charter Commission's proposal, Ballot Measure 26-228, despite the refusal from Mayor Ted Wheeler and three of the four members of the City Council to publicly support the measure.

Ironically, the only member of the City Council who did support the ballot measure, Jo Ann Hardesty, was defeated in the same election by Rene Gonzalez, who opposed it.

After the results were in, Mayor Wheeler released a statement saying, "Message Received!" The next two years will determine exactly what message the mayor and city council members think the voters sent.

The Charter Commission sent Measure 26-228 directly to the voters without referring it to the City Council as the law allows when there is near-unanimous support. That action seemed to annoy Mayor Wheeler and council member Mingus Mapps, who wanted to cherry-pick portions of the proposal that they supported and reject the other commission recommendations.

The November ballot was not the end of the Charter Commission work. It later voted to refer nine more proposals to Portland voters in November 2024. It also recommended six additional proposals to Portland City Council, which may reject, modify or refer them to the voters in November 2024. A city project team based in the office of the chief administrative officer is responsible for implementing voter-approved

changes to the City's election system and form of government.

The city plans three different citizen groups to assist in the transition process. A 13-member Independent District Commission will draw the boundaries for the four new council districts. A salary commission will establish salaries for elected officials. A charter transition advisory committee was intended to oversee the entire process.

The Charter Commission's final report was presented for public comment at the council's January 19, 2023, meeting. A former member of the Charter Commission and a representative of the League of Women Voters both expressed concern about delays in transition planning and appointment of the transition advisory committee.

Those concerns were ignored by all the council members present except for Commissioner Carmen Rubio. She alone expressed concern about the perception of delay. She tried to assure those involved in the Charter Commission process that the city was committed to transparency and urgency in the transition.

Commissioners Dan Ryan, Mingus Mapps and Rene Gonzalez made no mention of the perception of unnecessary delay as they voted to accept the final report of the Charter Commission. They also did not state of whether they support or oppose any of the Charter Commission's phase-two proposals.

Voters approved several major reforms in November. Instead of a five-member council with each member directly managing city bureaus, a 12-member city council will become a policy-setting legislative body. Members will be elected in 2024.

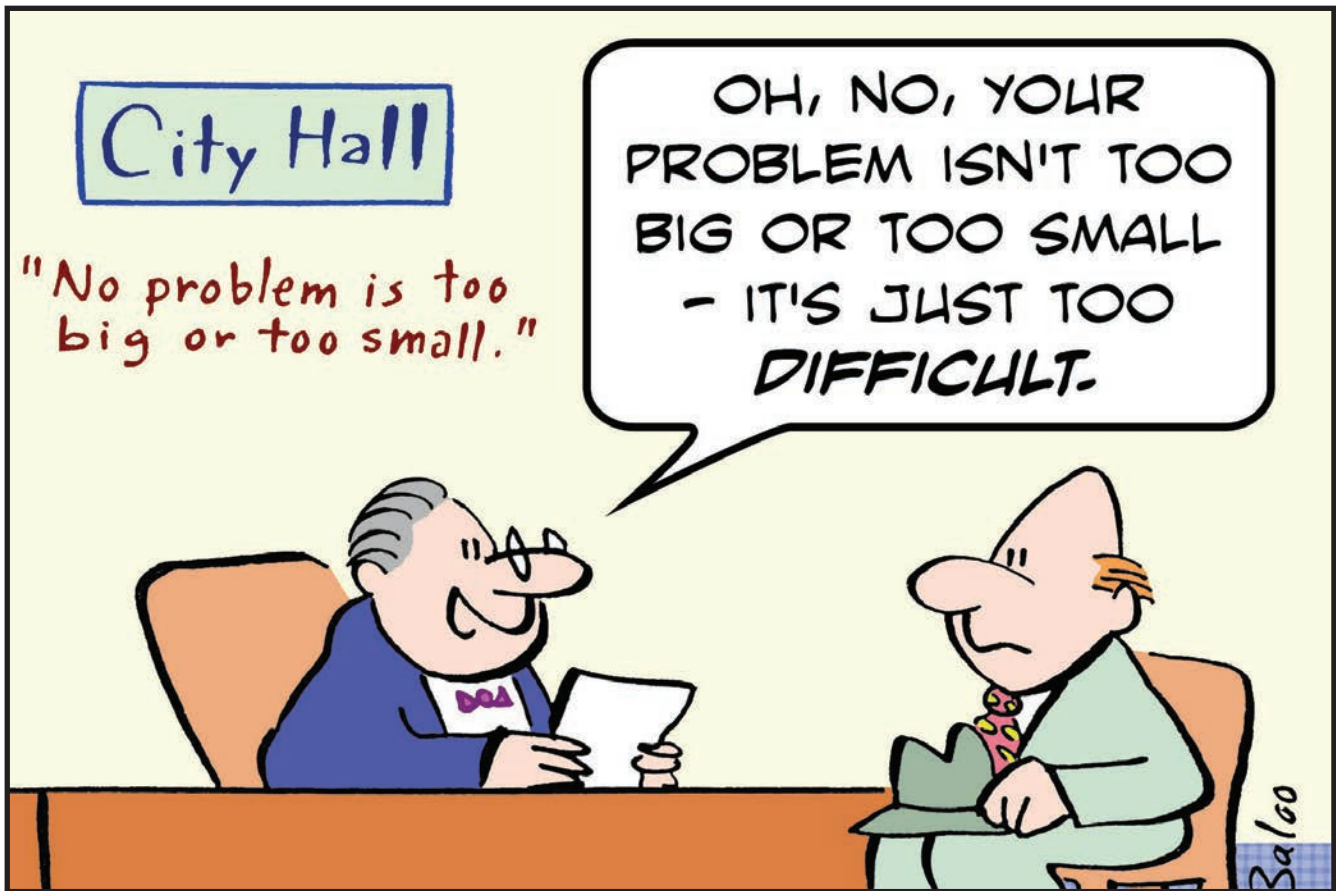
City operations will be the responsibility of the mayor who will hire and supervise a city administrator. All city bureaus will report to the city administrator.

Instead of being elected citywide, three council members will be elected from each of four districts, with the winners being selected by a process of ranked-choice voting. That type of election is sometimes called an instant-runoff election because the results will be determined in the general election without requiring an initial vote in a primary election or a possible run-off in the general election.

Portland city bureaus and offices initiated 11 of the 15 additional proposals in the Charter Commission's final report. The commission grouped the nine proposals that it referred directly to the voters into five ballot measures to conform to the requirement that ballot measures have a single subject. A super majority (15 or more votes on the 20-person commission)



Can you do another draft of this? There's still a couple of sentences people might actually understand...



approved the ballot measures referred directly to voters.

The Commission also voted to recommend six proposals to the City Council. These proposals received a majority, but not a super majority (11-15 votes) from the Commission members. The council may decide whether to reject, modify or accept the proposals. The proposals they modify or accept may then be referred to the ballot.

The proposals that received enough support to be referred directly to voters were:

Ballot Measure #1: Delete the prohibition on mandating the weatherization of structures built before September 1, 1979.

Ballot Measure #2: Create an independent Portland elections commission.

Ballot Measure #3: Delete outdated, burdensome, and redundant requirements for franchise agreements.

Ballot Measure #4: Delete vague and archaic language: "roaming the streets at unseasonable hours" and "offensive" businesses. Update, and make consistent, references to "protected classes." Replace "disability" with "incapacity" when referencing an elected official's inability to perform their duties.

Ballot Measure #5: Clarify language to reflect the City's existing role to protect recreational and natural resources,

and to protect and manage water, sewage and stormwater.

The proposals that were recommended to the City Council but did not receive enough votes to be placed directly on the ballot were:

Proposal #1: Remove the 5% cap on the city's transient lodgings tax.

Proposal #2: Create an article dedicated to environmental issues that includes environmental justice as a core value of the city, requires the city to assess the climate impact of its decisions and establishes a right to a clean and healthy environment.

Proposal #3: Establish meaningful public engagement as a core value of the city.

Proposal #4: Require the city to create by ordinance a participatory budgeting program open to all residents.

Proposal #5: Expand the right to vote in city elections to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Proposal #6: Create an office of the transparency advocate.

The commission's final report and transition information are available at <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission> and <https://www.portland.gov/transition>.



Photo: Robert French

Jim & Mona Fitzsimmons

Ask Mona Fitzsimmons about the mental capacity of an opossum. "Not smart," she says, measuring on a portion of her thumb their brain size. Raccoons, on the other hand, are pretty clever. They'll put their heads under water to watch minnows as potential lunch.

And speaking of water, Jim Fitzsimmons says that as Antarctic voyagers he and Mona took the opportunity to jump into the ocean when both air and water temperatures were 29 degrees F. "We did and have the photos to prove it," Jim says, and continues that people who do the polar plunge are "the most intrepid of travelers, some would say the craziest."

Resident Profile:

Jim & Mona Fitzsimmons Not Slowing Down

By **PAMELA LINDHOLM-LEVY**

Mona was licensed to do wildlife rescue in Texas when she and Jim lived in Austin, Texas. She worked with not only the opossums and raccoons, but also squirrels, foxes and others. Mona was required to have the two-dose rabies vaccine because any wild mammal could potentially be infected. High on that list are bats and skunks, and she did not take either into her care.

Four fox cubs with cataracts, diagnosed by a veterinary ophthalmologist, came through her home-based rescue and rehab "hospital." They could never be released to the wild, and so went to a wild-animal sanctuary.

Outfitted with incubators and cages, the Fitzsimmons home might also be a waystation for injured birds from hawks to blue jays. Mona and Jim's daughter, Samantha, worked with the animals and birds but was not then old enough to be licensed. Today that daughter is an administrative law judge for the State of Oregon based in Portland and the magnet for her parents being at Mirabella today.

While Mona wrangled the animals and taught swimming and lifesaving classes, Jim taught at the University of Texas McCombs School of Business for 35 years. He also taught at the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at UT, where he once met Lady Bird (President Lyndon Johnson's wife).

Mona and Jim's story together began when they were both students at the University of Michigan, where Jim studied industrial engineering and Mona was in journalism. They met at an afternoon fraternity dance-lesson party where Mona was the blind date of one of the pledges. When she danced with Jim, as she says, "The rest is history."

Before she could start college, though, Mona had had to work to supplement her upcoming scholarship. She was on the staff of the Oakland County, Michigan, newspaper.

Jim could be certain of duty in the armed services after graduation. He had been in the Air Force ROTC and with diploma in hand was sent much closer to home than he expected: Kincheloe Air Force Base in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The base needed a civil engineer, and he oversaw projects including base housing and a base golf course. During the Bay of Pigs crisis Jim recalls the base was "on the alert to protect our northern border from the Canadians, or so we joked."

Mona remembers living 33 of the 36 months under six feet of snow. Or maybe it was only 30 months, she reconsiders. After his three-year military commitment was up, Jim attended Western Michigan University for his MA and at the same time worked as an industrial engineer at a nearby Corning plant that made glass TV tubes (look how far we've come).

Jim wanted to pursue a doctorate, and sunny Southern California and UCLA were his pick. While he was getting the degree in operations management ("how you do the work," he says), Mona worked for Encyclopaedia Britannica Education Corporation making film strips about geology and biology for schools. At the same time, they had three small children at home — Michael, Gary and Samantha. As the children grew the family enjoyed camping in the west.

As Los Angeles expanded there was a problem getting ambulances to injury sites from hospitals, where they were always stationed waiting for calls. Response time had to be faster. Funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Jim took on a project to study at what times of day and what locations ambulances were needed most, how long the turnaround time was from leaving a hospital base to picking up the patient and getting to an ER.

Jim found that between 2 and 3 a.m. were heavy-use times as bars closed, and 6 a.m. and the following few hours were crash-prone commuting times. Freeway interchanges had more crashes than surface street corners did. He created an algorithm showing the most advantageous stationing of on-duty ambulances for picking up patients. Congregating at hospitals was changed to fanning out to hot spots. The plan can be applied to any town and city, is still in use and is free. Jim never profited monetarily from this potentially life-saving project.

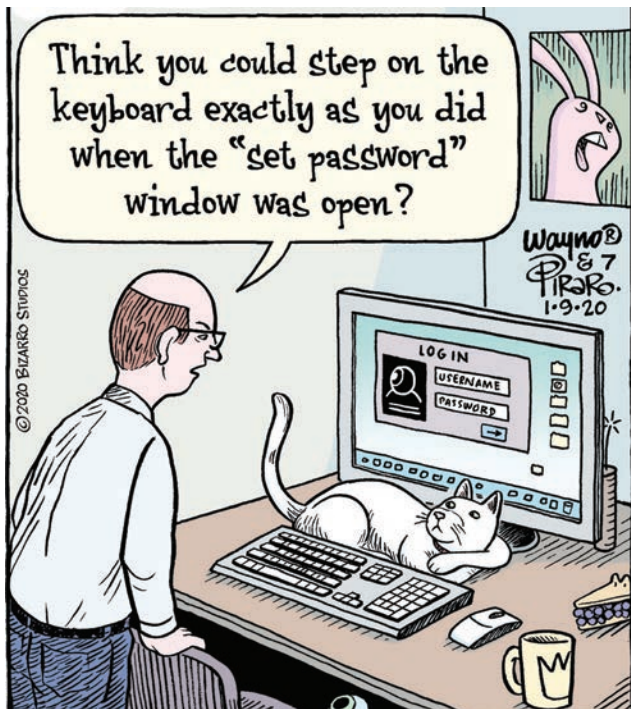
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After he received his Ph.D., Jim's first teaching position was at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. The family liked the city and its multi-cultural vibe. The schools were excellent and the Fitzsimmonses felt sorry to leave, but the University of Texas made Jim an offer he couldn't refuse.

In an isolated cabin in New Mexico, Jim and Mona collaborated on the first edition.

In Austin, Mona's wildlife rescue work began while Jim began his career at UT. The family enjoyed a year-long sabbatical in Germany, Italy and Belgium when the children were in 6th, 8th and 10th grades. A later sabbatical project created a book on service-industry management: healthcare, hospitality, entertainment and transportation such as airlines and railroads.



In an isolated cabin in New Mexico, Jim and Mona collaborated on the first edition. The cabin was so isolated that at least once a day and sometimes more frequently, the electricity would go off. Isolation included parking the car at the bottom of a hill and walking up to the cabin, but the circumstances gave them focus. No pesky distractions here. The book is in its 10th edition today.

Those years in Texas made the Fitzsimmonses realize how much they had loved California. They were drawn back not to LA but to a unique enclave along the Northern California coast: Sea Ranch, a planned community that employed a community manager as well as relying on the volunteer participation of residents.

After their house was built in 2000, Mona and Jim worked summers to finish the interior. Jim says it wasn't completely finished when they left Austin and moved into the house in 2006. It was a home with a view, about 325 feet from the ocean. Though distant from an urban center, Sea Ranch teemed with activity such as theater, mini-TED talks by resident experts, a huge community garden (not just plots), pickleball; tennis and other sports. Mona became the pool monitor.

After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, redwoods from near Sea Ranch's location today were logged and milled for lumber to rebuild the city. With the reality of California earthquakes almost at their door, Mona and Jim served on the disaster preparedness committee at Sea Ranch for 15 years. Now they are on Mirabella Portland's mobile emergency team, fitting right into its mission.

Two Fitzsimmons children are Reed College graduates. Mona and Jim were familiar with Portland because of visits to those children. With Samantha living in the area now, Mirabella Portland was a natural when Mona and Jim decided they were ready for a retirement community.

After moving in February 2022, they have plunged right into activities. Besides the mobile team, they both worked on the silent auction portion of the 2022 Fall Fete. Mona is on the Employee Appreciation Fund committee. She still enjoys swimming, and does it every morning in the warm (not polar) pool. Jim participates in pickleball and bocce ball and rides his bike, as well as being in the sports interest group. This fiscal year he is foundation advisory committee chair.

Not quite ready to put away the suitcases permanently, Mona wants to travel to Antarctica at least one more time. She and Jim have been there together twice and still remember the blue and white world and how quiet it was, and of course the polar plunge. They loved the birds and animals they saw.

Whether this trip happens or not, the Fitzsimmonses will keep up their volunteer and active life at Mirabella. ●

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Jessica Lind by Jingzi Zhao



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Our Neighbors: Children and Mice

By PAMELA LINDHOLM-LEVY

A visitor walks with her escort down a hallway in a building in the South Waterfront. It's November 30, 2022. A huge box-on-wheels pushed against the wall is labeled "17 Mice Heads."

Really? Mice! The visitor expects that only the Knight Cancer Center Institute or a research lab in the CHH buildings would have mice. In cages and whole mice, not just heads.

What is this? Then the visitor is invited to sit on a folding chair in the alcove of a large room. Aha! There are the mice heads. Humans are wearing them. The mice are in a fight. Oof. The Mouse King is killed and carried away aloft. This is a large rehearsal studio, and the rehearsal director stops the music. The heads come off, revealing young male dancers rehearsing a scene from "The Nutcracker" ballet, music by

Tchaikovsky and choreographed by George Balanchine.

The director suggests some improvements. The heads go on again, the music starts from the large stereo array behind the visitor's chair and the scene is played again, and again and again. Ten days later "The Nutcracker" went live at Keller Auditorium to the delight and wonder that this holiday classic brings to children everywhere.

Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) is a South Waterfront neighbor, tucked in a corner of South Bancroft Street where it ends just east of South Bond Avenue. OBT was established in 1989 by the merger of Pacific Ballet Theatre and Ballet Oregon. OBT's first artistic director was James Canfield, a former principal with the Joffrey Ballet in New York. Under Canfield's leadership the repertoire grew to 80 ballets.

When he became artistic director in 2013, Kevin Irving



Photo: Jingzi Zhao

Carley Wheaton as Sugar Plum Fairy in Oregon Ballet Theatre's production of George Balanchine's "The Nutcracker" at the Keller Auditorium.

brought back a program created at each original company: "Romeo and Juliet" at one and "Scheherazade" at the other. Irving also promoted new works and mounted the world-premiere performances of ballets by three female choreographers. Currently, Peter Franc is interim artistic director while OBT searches for a permanent leader.

The mouse king is killed many times before rehearsal director Jeffery Stanton turns the studio over to Lisa Kipp, lead rehearsal director, who has been with OBT for 18 years. She will be polishing up what is called the party scene of "The Nutcracker." The room is flooded with children playing children and slightly older dancers playing their parents. On the sidelines, Colleen Hildestad, children's performance coordinator, stands by quietly. Hildestad is the company's liaison with parents. She manages the young dancers' schedules as well as the touring and booking dates of OBT2, the junior company. She also oversees Covid policy at the rehearsal and performance venues.

Both boys and girls are at the party, but OBT lacks enough boy dancers. At rehearsal, the "boys" wear white T-shirts. All but one is a girl. The "girls" wear red leotards or shirts. Whether the girls are girls or the girls portray boys, they all have their hair up in buns with nary a stray lock. The choreography is quite elaborate and needs repeating over and over.

"Bigger skipping," the director requests. "Look at each other," she demands. She reminds the dancers they must know their left from their right and that all need to begin and end on the same foot. She is endlessly patient and patience plus repetition seems to be what makes perfect.

The OBT company comprises four principal dancers, four soloists, 15 company artists and four apprentices, though this year's "Nutcracker" was cast with OBT student dancers from ages 7 to 18. One performer has been dancing this ballet since she was 3.

OBT runs the ballet school at its headquarters. The school badly needs more space. Cast members waiting to rehearse and kids waiting for classes rest and chat along the hallways in the shadows of the "trucks" holding rehearsal skirts and tutus, costumes and props like mice heads and the mouse king's sword. All will all be moved to the Keller for final rehearsals and then showtime.

Children from ages 3 to 6 can take pre-ballet classes. This visitor watched a segment of a class of about a dozen students about 10 years old. The girls wore the same-color leotards — lavender. One slightly older girl wore fuchsia. She was doing a makeup class. The three boys wore tights and white t-shirts. Teachers may or may not be company members. Live piano music seeped through the glass walls of the studio. Looking for a challenging exercise program? OBT

holds beginning ballet classes for seniors. Barre work is an essential component in getting older bodies moving like prima ballerinas. The OBT website has details.

OBT performers dance to a live orchestra during some performances and recorded music during others. For many years

the orchestra conductor was Niel DePonte, who retired in the fall of 2022. The interim conductor for this performance season is Raul Gomez-Rojas, who is also music director of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony.

Mirabella residents will be familiar with cellist Hamilton Cheifetz and his virtuoso playing that has thrilled us many times. He is principal cellist with the OBT orchestra and has been with the group for 15 years. He says, "The orchestra is excellent and the level of playing has risen dramatically in the last few years because of the addition of some very fine players. It is a great pleasure to play in a first-rate orchestra and I always enjoy making music with my friends and colleagues."

He has played "The Nutcracker" more than 300 times, though his favorite ballet score is Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet." "The Nutcracker's" music does not get old for Cheifetz. He says it gives him the opportunity to work on his technique while playing a familiar score..

OBT's 2022-23 season began with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," then moved on to "The Nutcracker." "La Sylphide" followed in February and "Firebird" will be seen in April. Four world premiere pieces, "Made in Portland," complete the season in June. They were commissioned from choreographers asked to explore what it means to live in Portland.

Mirabella residents receive discounts on tickets to see and enjoy the skill and artistry of a South Waterfront neighbor, Oregon Ballet Theatre. Many thanks to Natasha Kautsky for the invitation to watch OBT rehearsals and for information about the company. ●

Mirabella residents receive discounts on tickets.



Photo: Ron Mendonca

Richard Gomez

Richard Gomez attributes his ability to solve mechanical problems to his childhood on a farm in Central California, where his parents were migrant workers from different parts of Mexico. They obtained green cards and settled on a 60-acre grape farm near Fresno, where Richard was born.

His father was foreman of the workers during harvest time. "On a farm you have to learn how to fix everything," Richard remembers, "and my parents taught me common sense and a good work ethic." Richard's schooling through high school was in the tiny town of Salma, "Raisin Capital of the World."

While Richard was studying airplane engines at community college, 911 happened and he decided to make a pivot to pharmaceutical technician and then janitor in a long-term retirement community. He discovered that he enjoyed working with elderly people, perhaps because he had lost his

plenty to do," he recalls.

Mirabella maintenance is now fully staffed with seven people. Richard describes his training method as "family based." At the Tuesday department meetings all issues can be raised to be solved then and there. "All staff members can have their say. This creates a happy staff who provide a cushion for residents, knowing that all issues will be taken care of and that they are safe," explains Richard. "I have been in the

Every member of the maintenance staff carries a small vigil pager.

Staff Profile:

Richard Gomez

18 years in the ageing industry and loving it

By PRISCILLA COWELL

grandparents when he was young and it filled a void.

In 2005 he met a young woman online and decided to follow her to Portland to see what might come of getting to know her better. They have now been married for 15 years and have one daughter, Isabella.

Richard had wanted a greener and more outdoors lifestyle and loves living in Portland. He enjoys doing landscape photography and often goes to Sauvie Island to hunt ducks and geese. The fowl are taken home to make his family's favorite dish: jalapeno peppers cut in half, deseeded, and filled with cream cheese, wrapped in duck breast and bacon, and popped in the oven.

In 2011 Richard found Mirabella, happy to return to work in the field of ageing. He was janitor and night watchman, then a maintenance tech. He took a 3-year hiatus with another company, but returned to Mirabella and in September 2021 became maintenance manager. "We were just opening up the building after the Covid lockdown and there was

ageing industry for 18 years and am loving it."

The maintenance department has many different tasks. Staff members do the set-up for all events; sub for valet and concierge; maintain heating and air-conditioning, lighting, plumbing, appliances and kitchen equipment in residents' apartments; take care of the "envelope" of the building, including the air handlers that deliver fresh air, cooled or heated air and the boilers for hot water; and are first responders for 911, pendant and fire calls.

Every member of the maintenance staff carries a small vigil pager. When a resident pushes the button on an emergency pendant the pager beeps and shows the resident's name and apartment number so the staff can respond quickly.

Richard says the biggest challenge during his time in maintenance was when the transformer blew in February 2021. "I was on the second floor and we had to move everyone to a safe area. Then we brought in water and had to find electrical connections powered by the generator and attach all medical devices to keep them going." It took two days.

Asked if the rioters who gathered in Caruthers Park during the pandemic presented any problems for Mirabella, Richard replied, "We kept an eye on the mobs, but it appeared that no one tried to breach or damage Mirabella. We were lucky. But I am required to answer my phone, so someone is always on call."

Richard encourages his staff to take advantage of the Mirabella Foundation scholarships. He has used scholarships to improve his technical and managerial skills, obtaining a license in heating & ventilation and taking leadership classes. He would like to be director of maintenance one day.

Richard once did ancestry testing and found that he had 60% ancestry from Spain and 40% from Aztec or Inca populations. He hopes to visit Spain one day to see what the people of one of his ancestral roots look like. ●

The Biggest Portland Company You've Never Heard of

By PETE SWAN

The Portland metropolitan area is the headquarters of a remarkable Fortune-400-size company that is not as well-known to Portland residents as Columbia Sportswear or Nike. The company is Precision Castparts Corporation (PCC), which since 2016 has been owned by Warren Buffet's company, Berkshire Hathaway.

Depending on your perspective, PCC could be described as an innovative high-tech company with a global market or an aggressive competitor generating local environmental concerns.

PCC sells its sophisticated metal products to buyers in several major industries. In 2015, when it was an independent, publicly traded company, PCC employed 30,000 people in almost 120 locations around the world. One of its subsidiaries, PCC Structural, has a 664,000-square-foot factory in southeast Portland.

As the name implies, PCC produces cast-metal parts, the majority of which become components for airframes and turbines. Such products are typically made of lightweight, exotic alloys. Investment analysts have described PCC's markets as 68% aerospace, 18% power generation and 14% general industrial.

PCC produces most of these components by a technique called investment casting. In this process, a die (a pattern made to demanding tolerances) is created in specialized wax. The die is mounted on a "tree" (think of each end-product as a branch).

Next, a mold is created by dipping the die — now coated in a ceramic slurry — repeatedly in sticky fine sand (stucco). Following the creation of this mold, the wax is melted by steam- or oven-heating and drained off for reuse. Then molten metal is poured through a gate in the tree trunk to fill the resulting cavity. After the metal solidifies, the mold is removed and the finished product is carefully cut off the tree.

Following inspection of the pieces to ensure close tolerances have been met (or possible sanding and polishing if they have not), the products are ready for delivery. PCC mostly sells directly to manufacturers of airplanes and power plants.

PCC has a substantial market share for turbine blades (think jet engines and natural-gas-powered electricity-generating plants). In those markets, the blades must fit precisely, withstand deforming under extreme temperatures and be durable.

The company also manufactures forged products turned out by a 50,000-ton press in its plant in Grafton, Massachusetts. This press — one of the largest in the world — rises 10 stories and has a foundation sunk 100 feet into bedrock.

In Houston, its Wyman-Gordon subsidiary produces extruded seamless pipe for use in the oil and gas industry.

"Highly engineered" metal fasteners are made by PCC subsidiaries in Pennsylvania, California, Japan and the United Kingdom. Each Boeing 777 airliner requires nearly a million of these metal fasteners. Each 747 had nearly 3 million.

PCC has been aggressive in making horizontal acquisitions (of competitors) and vertical acquisitions (of suppliers). These purchases reduced competition and/or gained intellectual property in the former and ensured supply or captured benefit from other end-markets in the latter.

One of PCC's most significant acquisitions was Timet (formerly known as Titanium Metals Corporation). Timet had valuable proprietary know-how. It also had a substantial refining capacity capable of producing titanium with the quality and metallurgical characteristics needed by PCC. Owning Timet also allowed PCC to supply other foundries with bespoke titanium alloys.



This is the 76-inch diameter airplane component that Precision Castparts claims is the world's largest cast metal object."

In 1999, PCC bought Wyman-Gordon for \$721 million plus debt of \$104 million. It then acquired Primus International (a supplier to Boeing and Airbus) for \$900 million.

Another PCC subsidiary, PCC Metals, has developed more than 75% of the nickel alloys used by the oil and gas industry. It is also a leader in producing “superalloys” using cobalt and iron.

The Lake Oswego-headquartered company has a significant rival in Howmet Aerospace, a corporation spun off from an Alcoa subsidiary in 2020. Howmet, based in Pittsburgh, casts turbine blades for the front-fan assembly in jet engines. It states its blades are innovative in that they use single-crystal metallurgy that makes the blades lighter and able to run cooler. Howmet also competes with PCC in manufacturing aerospace fasteners.

PCC’s dominance in turbine components, especially in blades (also known as vanes), and in airframe components makes PCC a major supplier for commercial and military aviation. PCC casts circular airframe items up to 76 inches in diameter.

Metallurgy-intensive businesses such as PCC sometimes have issues related to disposing or recycling byproducts and effluents. A class action, *Resendez v. Precision Castparts, Inc. and PCC Structural, Inc.* was brought against the company in 2016 for allowing emission of allegedly polluting vapors that “interfere with any reasonable use of surrounding properties.” The case was settled with the PCC defendants agreeing to install \$1.95 million worth of enhanced pollution controls. PCC has since spent \$7.7 million on additional emission-control equipment and established a \$12.5 million class-action settlement fund.

As in most class-action settlements, the attorneys will take a lion’s share of any recovery. Class members will get shares of the residue based on how many properties they own within the defined area: an oval-shape oriented from the Southeast (near Johnson Creek) to the Northwest. A geographic picture can be found at www.structuralsettlement.com.

The class action did not include claims for groundwater pollution. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has found a significant plume of chlorinated solvents in the groundwater under PCC’s plant. The Portland Bureau of Environmental Services has also found PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in PCC’s pipes that discharge into Johnson Creek.

So, our high-tech Portland company, an impressive global player, has some environmental issues.

In 2015, PCC was ranked ninth among the nation’s

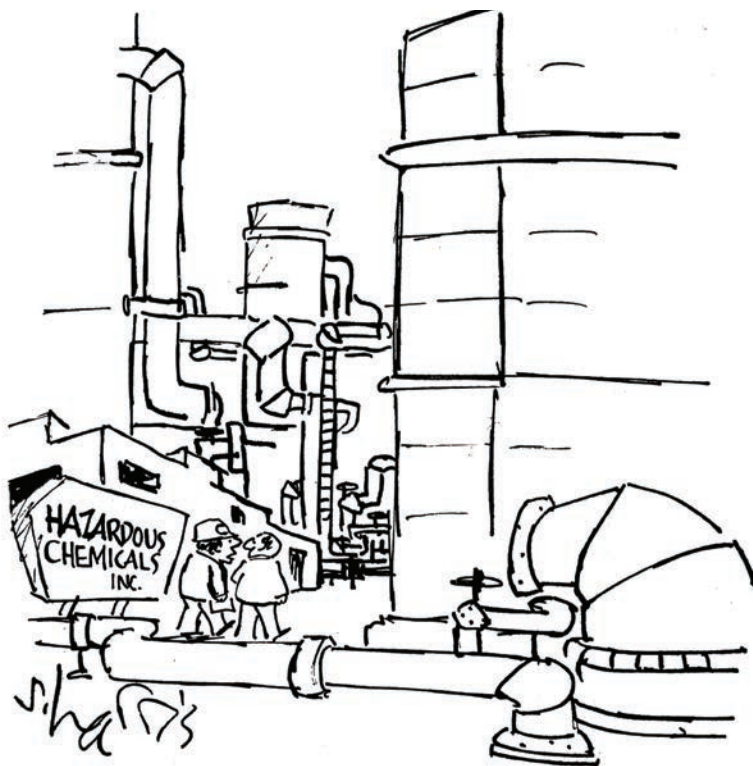
aerospace/defense companies. In 2014, the company’s reported gross revenue was \$9.6 billion with net income of \$1.7 billion.

Buffet has said he paid too much (a rare occurrence for that masterful investor); the reported purchase price was \$37 billion including an assumption of outstanding debt. Berkshire later took an \$11 billion write-down on its investment.

Buffett looks for companies with, among other values, superlative managers. Once the deal is closed, he wants those managers to continue their successful ways by remaining at the helm.

True to his pattern, Buffett left top management in place. Mark Donegan — PCC’s long-time CEO and the strategist behind many of PCC’s acquisitions — still runs the company.

PCC is a remarkable company with a factory near Johnson Creek in southeast Portland, albeit one under the microscope on environmental issues. Is it a high-tech manufacturer with global markets? Or is it an aggressive business with some environmental baggage? ●



“The funny thing is our wastes are perfectly harmless.”

Puns: the Lowest/Highest Form of Humor

By RITA BRICKMAN EFFROS

With all the excitement and interest in the World Cup and various Olympic rivalries, one could easily miss another important competitive activity: the international contest for punsters that takes place in Austin, Texas, each year. Pairs of contestants are given a topic and take turns coming up with puns related to the topic.

John Pollack, a speechwriter for President Bill Clinton, was the 1995 winner of the O. Henry Pun-Off World Championship, using puns from five languages — English, French, Yiddish, Spanish and Catalan. He proved his creds by authoring a book titled “The Pun Also Rises.”

Interestingly, history reveals that puns were not originally humorous at all. In ancient Greece and Babylonia, punning often had religious connections and could even lead to armed conflict. Currently, punning resides in the realm of humor and recently as a topic for serious academic study. More on this later.

As early as 35,000 years ago, there is evidence of human punning in the caves of Europe and the Middle East. There, an oblong statue served as a deliberate visual pun, suggesting that men and women are opposites, but inseparable. A woman with breasts, belly and thighs, when rotated 180 degrees becomes an erect penis.

Civilizations as early as 1635 BCE are rich in puns, as evidenced from archeological studies. Indeed, the Rosetta Stone showed that ancient Egyptians were avid punsters.

The Mayan civilization, which reached its political peak between 250 and 900, was apparently rich in puns. The evidence consists of carved hieroglyphs with multiple meanings, both serious and humorous. One group, Chamulans, had ritualized verbal duels involving riddles, jokes, proverbs and insults — many of which were based on clever puns.

Shakespeare is well-known for his writing as well as for the invention of new words. But he is less known for his puns, including this one from “Romeo and Juliet.” After Mercutio is lethally stabbed, he quips “Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man.”

Fast forward to 1958 when Trader Joe’s opened in Southern California. This national chain is famous for its groan-worthy puns, such as Inner Peas dried veggies, Hold the Cone ice cream snacks and the occasional sign featuring Mr. T announcing, “I pita the fool.”

The Daily Show’s Jon Stewart used puns extensively to mock the news. Highlights include his Iraq war moniker “Mess O’Potamia,” his “deflategate” label for the New England Patriots football air pressure scandal and his name for Supreme Court Justice Scalia a “human dissentipede.”

What makes wordplay, especially puns, such an enduring feature of languages as diverse as French, Japanese, Egyptian, English, Chinese, Greek, Roman and Arabic? It has been postulated that punning probably depended on the evolutionary development of homo sapiens, whose anatomical and physiological status allowed for advanced speech. Indeed, though curmudgeons may view puns with scorn, this oft-maligned wordplay is actually linked to human creativity and progress.

Along with the controversy over the merit of puns as a form of humor, scholars cannot even agree on the etymology of the word itself. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the word “pun” might possibly be slang cut from a longer word, but ultimately concludes that it is “of uncertain origin.”

One of the earliest Indo-European languages, Sanskrit, is rich in puns, though not for humorous effect. Puns were perceived to have power to reveal underlying divine truths beyond the surface of any given word. Since English has adopted many words from Sanskrit, such as wit, shampoo, jungle, bandana and pundit, why not ‘pun’ as well?

There are multiple categories of English puns. Soundalike puns, or homophones, are words that are spelled differently but sound the same. A daycare provider signage that conveys a bit of charm and humor is Wee Care Day Care. The appeal of this business is that it indicates a statement of philosophy as well as the clarification that the target population is children or little ones.

Story puns require a narrative set-up. A good example is one about Mahatma Gandhi, known for his incredibly long barefoot walks and his chronically bad breath due to



frequent fasting. Do you know what this made him? A super-calloused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.

Close-sounding puns require language agility. They also often elicit groans, as in we bake to differ and a skunk fell into the river and stank to the bottom.

Daffynitions are yet another pun category that was used as the basis of a contest by The Washington Post. Here are some of the recent winning submissions:
Flabbergasted: appalled by how much weight you've gained
Abdicated: to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach
Rectitude: the formal, dignified bearing adopted by proctologists

A final word-play categorized as a pun is the portman-teau, which combines parts of two or more words to create a unique hybrid. We are all familiar with smog, brunch and the over-the-top Thanksgiving presentation, the turducken.

It seems that artificial intelligence may never achieve the human skill of punning or understanding puns. Researchers at the University of Cincinnati discovered that a specifically programmed computer could identify the existence of word-play in knock-knock jokes, but failed to determine whether the punch-line actually worked. So, even talented programmers were unable to encode the subtle rules of what makes something humorous.

Polysemy is a linguistic term describing the coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase. Although it is a fundamental characteristic of all natural languages, humans can unconsciously and automatically understand the intended meaning of the written or spoken word by knowing the context. Indeed, they do not normally perceive any ambiguity in processing written or spoken language. By contrast, computers lack this inherent ability to process ambiguous language. The issue of polysemy has been the subject of intensive research in the field of computational linguistics.

There is a rare medical condition (*witzelsucht*) associated with a compulsive urge to continuously crack jokes or puns. One of the first documented cases occurred in Germany in 1929 during brain surgery on a tumor.

When the neurologist started manipulating the patient's cancerous growth, the man, who was intentionally kept conscious at the time, suddenly began recounting pun after pun. Since then, many other cases have been observed. They are usually associated with some sort of brain trauma, such as a stroke or brain hemorrhage.

Neurologist Mario Mendez at UCLA has been studying the brain mechanism underlying puns and other forms of humor. The brain processing appears to occur in a network of frontal lobe regions, the area associated with more-complex, analytical thought. He also reported that patients with a certain type of frontotemporal dementia may have a tendency toward compulsive punning.

Analysis of the brain processes involved in understanding puns has been greatly advanced by functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). Researchers in San Diego and Ghent, Belgium, were able to analyze brain waves and correlate them with visual fields as subjects read certain statements. They were then able to measure whether the subjects "got" a pun or not, their speed in deciphering it and which parts of the brain were involved.

Puns are often considered juvenile or simple, but this is far from the truth. Indeed, research in this area has shown that puns require the brain to maintain multiple meanings of a word simultaneously.

Although puns are often greeted with groans, the language needed to understand a pun is very sophisticated. Puns demand considerable language agility because they require processing sound and meaning of words twice. For this reason, educators often use puns as a tool for teaching English.

Learning to understand a joke is both a cause and a consequence of becoming proficient in a new language. Even native-language speakers require certain background knowledge and linguistic information in order "to get" a joke. English language teachers find that if a class can laugh together, it is more likely that their collective learning experience will also be improved. Interestingly, neuroscientists have shown that the ability to pun correlates not only with language skills but also with proficiency in math and science.

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Puns also play a significant role in the early language development of young children. Relationships among words, sounds, context and meaning are revealed by this type of humor. If you listen carefully, you'll notice that many of the knock-knock jokes and riddles communicated in the playground are based on puns, for example, "What has four wheels and flies?" (Answer: a garbage truck).

Every good dad joke and every terrible dad joke is usually a pun. Indeed, how else could you get so much mileage toward both entertaining and embarrassing your kids? To help you in this endeavor, here are a few of the best/worst ones downloaded from the numerous pun websites:

I saw an ad for burial plots, but that's the last thing I need.

I don't trust stairs ... they are always up to something.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. It's impossible to put down.

Cartoonist found dead in home. Details are sketchy.
Just burned 2,000 calories. That's the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I nap.

A Freudian slip is when you say one thing and mean your mother.

I got fired from the calendar factory just for taking a day off.

What's the best thing about Switzerland? A: Well, the flag is a big plus.

Clones are people two.

The past, present, and future walk into a bar. It was tense.

Shopping centers, you've seen one, you've seen the mall.

I wanted to learn how to drive a stick shift, but I couldn't find a manual.

Napoleon may not have designed his coat, but he did have a hand in it. ●

A Portland Treasure

By JOHANNA KING



Photo: Johanna King

One of Portland's many small treasures is Henry Higgins Boiled

Bagels, which has three retail shops around town. The shops are open seven days a week, but you have to go early, as popular varieties can sell out.

The owner, Leah Orndoff, came to Portland about 15 years ago to "teach Portland what a properly baked and boiled bagel is all about."

She has been successful — Henry's recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

The bagels are New York-style, boiled and baked on cedar boards in a large, traditional six-deck stone oven. While plain and everything are the most popular types, you can get regular and seasonal varieties such as jalapeno, salt, pumpernickel and pumpkin.

You may also order bagels, cream, cheese lox and whitefish salad in bulk for a party.

When I visited, a steady stream of happy customers was coming and going. ●

Henry Higgins Boiled Bagels is located at
1325 S.E. Tacoma Street, Portland, OR 97202

My First Airplane Ride

By ED PARKER

My first airplane ride was a memorable one, but not remembered by me. I was too young.

Not many people have an adventure at age three weeks that results in a story in a national paper. The 1932 news story in a Toronto, Canada, paper was headlined "Baby Parker's First Ride." I still have the newspaper clipping, now yellowed with age.

My father was a United Church of Canada clergyman in his first posting after graduation from divinity school. Home was a tiny community called Notikewin in a part of northern Alberta that had just been opened to homesteading in the late 1920s. Yes, that was homesteading as in the "Little House on the Prairie" books.

We didn't have electricity, water pipes or even a radio. Heating was by a wood stove. Lighting was by kerosene lantern. We had an outhouse and chamber pot. The family Saturday-night bath was in a galvanized iron tub on the kitchen floor with water heated on the wood stove.

I was born in January of 1932 in Berwyn, Alberta, which had the most northerly hospital in the province, about 60 miles south of home. Travel over the road between the two communities was a bit of an adventure in the best of times and certainly not a reliable route for a newborn through the bitter cold and snowdrifts of a northern Alberta winter.

Always a creative problem solver, my father found a solution. Twice a month a single-engine airplane equipped with skis in winter flew over Notikewin from Berwyn to Fort Vermillion to

deliver mail to that remote outpost. I was the third passenger in that two-passenger airplane on its early February flight. The plane did not normally land in Notikewin, which had no airfield. But the adventurous bush pilots of the day were willing to go anywhere there was snow-covered level ground.

As my dad frequently told the story, the last leg of my journey home was by dog sled. However, I can't confirm that detail. My Dad occasionally embellished a good story.

