

3550



June 2021

a publication by and for the residents of Mirabella Portland





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*Co-Editor*



**Barbara Gaines**  
*President*

**A** BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDY OF “TENS OF THOUSANDS of middle-aged people” to determine what behaviors led to a longer life reached some surprising results. The researcher, Julianne Holt-Lunstad, asked questions covering “every aspect of their lifestyle,” waited seven years to see who survived and then made a chart of what behaviors led to a longer life.

At the bottom of Holt-Lunstad’s chart of values was Clean Air and slightly above that, Exercise and Give Up Smoking.

Second from the top of her chart was “close relationships,” described as people we can go to when in trouble, borrow money from , or ask to drive our sick cat to the vet

Topping her list was Social Integration, “the number of people you talk to as you move through the day.” These were not close friends but people we interact with.

Clearly, we residents are well situated at Mirabella. Standing outside the Tower elevator bank we should no longer eye people waiting there as possible threats to our next ride but think of them as “interactions,” to use the study’s term. Appropriate responses are a slam dunk. “Slow today,” is obvious, “Been waiting long?” even better since it indicates concern. Not only may we be building extra minutes into our life expectancy, we are establishing ourselves as congenial, if not particularly original, people.

Our staff also provide us with rich opportunities: the concierge, the person manning the Aria desk, the server who takes our order in Aria, the maintenance guy who unclogs our sink. Points to us if we remember which server is in graduate school, who is working two jobs to achieve a goal, or if we can come up with their first name without squinting at a badge.

The point, of course, is not merely to add extra hours to life but to take part in its richness. Holt-Lunstad’s study suggests that one way to find it lies close at hand. ■

**A**S I SIT HERE AT MY COMPUTER, IT IS A BEAUTIFUL SPRING DAY with clear skies and sun shining in my window. Just looking out brings a sense of calm as did a walk early this morning. Experiencing nature, experts and pundits tell us, can help bring some balance to our otherwise conflicting hopes and cautions as we continue to cope with shifting pandemic realities. I encourage you to get outside as you are able to walk by the river or sit in the park.

Residents accomplished another extraordinary fund-raising event to thank staff for service that went well beyond their job requirements during the storms and transformer catastrophe. Residents contributed \$7,415 to pay for three catered lunches for all staff on all shifts in all service areas. To make sure the staff knew we cared, fresh-baked cookies accompanied each lunch entrée. Let me assure you the cookies were mouthwatering, plentiful and appreciated. Thanks to all our bakers, council members and advisory committee chairs who served as hosts. The money raised above the cost of the lunches was donated to the foundation and assigned by the Foundation Advisory Committee to the two employee-specific funds with foundation board approval.

The RAMP agenda has continued to move forward. An ad hoc annual giving committee chaired by vice-president Jim McGill is proposing a framework and calendar for planned giving that spreads requests across the year. The Mirabella Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee (MEPS) is offering a series of informational sessions to help us individually and collectively be better prepared for future disasters as well as exploring cross-training programs between MEPS responders and Mirabella staff. Additional fire safety measures will move up on the council agenda. RAMP committees continue to provide direction to the council and you as residents are invited to do so also.

Take care, wear your mask, wash your hands, distance appropriately and get outside as much as possible. ■



**O**N THE COVER:  
John Toppel  
rides his bike  
past springtime cherry  
blossoms. Photo by Robert  
French



**B**ACK COVER:  
Mirabella residents  
Ed Parker, Anne  
Clark and Reese Berman,  
along with server Harrison  
Taylor, admire the view  
from Aria East. Photo by  
Stanley Berman.

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### 3550 MAGAZINE

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## New Wi-Fi/Internet Being Installed

WORKING WITH FACILITY SERVICES' MICHAEL HARDIN, the contractor Gigabit Now will be installing in residents' apartments a larger communications panel that will accommodate Mirabella's new Internet services.

The team of contractors will move from apartment to apartment, following a schedule that Director of Resident Services Megan Huston sent out on March 31. Residents can find a copy of the memo on the Miranet under news and updates.

The second step of this process, "Connecting your electronic devices to the new Internet service will happen in a later phase of the project," says Ed Parker of Mirabella's media committee.

One resident noted that contractors for this project worked hard to avoid creating dust and minimize any inconvenience.

The new Internet service will be paid for through our fees although residents will pay extra for services such as HBO. ■

## Mirabella Players Spring Show

THE MIRABELLA PLAYERS RETURN TO THE STAGE FOR A SPRING show featuring three short plays by two local playwrights.

At press time, tentative plans were in the works for a June presentation at Willamette Hall if Covid precautions permit, otherwise on Zoom.

The Mirabella Players company has used Zoom to stage its works before, and "we are learning to adapt to a new medium," according to group founder Nancy Moss (who also serves as co-editor of 3550.)

On tap for the Spring show:

"Elizabeth Bangs Bryant, Spiderwoman," a monologue by Nancy Moss about a woman obsessed with her job, stars Mikki Lipsey.

"Sexy Selfies," by Nancy. This one also features Mikki and Nancy, together with John Toppel. A woman lies to her husband about the nude photo she took of herself.

"Light My Fire," by Portland playwright Rich Rubin. Ron Mendonca and Lynne DeVries star in this one, where noises made by their upstairs neighbors, dimly remembered by the elderly couple below, keep them awake. (No. The noise upstairs is not a Live Nation production.)

Chapel Theatre produced Nancy's play, "Detained," in February, and Bags & Baggage Theatre produced her monologue, "Insurrection," in January and February.

Rich Rubin's "Picasso in Paris" won the 2020 Julie Harris playwriting award.

Check Miranet, the resident Google Group and bulletin board notices for details once performance dates are set. ■

—Steve Casey

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## Staff Vaccinations Stall

TO A MAN AND WOMAN, MIRABELLA RESIDENTS ARE GRATEFUL for the virtually flawless administration effort to give the two-shot Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to every resident who wanted it.

One hundred percent did.

"It's been a huge stress-reliever," one resident told 3550. "It's made me so much more comfortable dining or riding the elevator or just walking in the hallways, knowing every resident I meet is fully vaccinated."

But are the employees all vaccinated? No.

The employee vaccination rate is slowly approaching 80%, according to executive director Sharon McCartney. A dozen employees have "expressed interest" in the new clinics to be offered here, but the number has held steady.

While attorneys have different views about it, a quirk in Oregon law seems to forbid requiring employees to take vaccine, and some have not – at least not yet.

"We can't require staff to be vaccinated, but we certainly do encourage it," Sharon said.

"Even in the Health Center, we can't mandate vaccination, but the law does require that we provide vaccination

to every health care worker here who wants it."

While required to provide vaccine only to health care workers, Sharon has made it available to every Mirabella employee.

"Getting shots into every possible arm is the best way

to keep us all safe – residents, fellow staff members, visitors, contractors, the whole Mirabella community," she said.

And the effort is not over.

Whenever there are six employees (or new, unvaccinated residents) who want the shots, Sharon can get a small shipment of vaccine and make that happen. ■



*The South Waterfront Farmers Market  
will be back at Elizabeth Caruthers Park  
on June 3!*

## Composting Arrives at Mirabella

STARTING THIS SPRING, MIRABELLA BEGAN WORKING with Waste Management to recycle kitchen waste. Mirabella's kitchens bring composting materials to the 64-gallon bins in the loading dock area, and compost pick-up is three times a week.

This process meets Portland's rule that all commercial buildings must divert their food waste to compost by March, 2022.

At its opening in 2010, Mirabella's restaurants composted food scraps, but problems with flies and odors in its limited kitchen space stopped the process. Food scraps went to landfill with all the other garbage.

Adding an air curtain, streaming air that separates the compost area from the kitchen, cut down on the earlier problem of flies and odors and enabled the new process.

This is a big step forward.

Writing in *The New Yorker*, Rivka Galchen notes that "organic waste becomes a climate poison" and that composting "transforms raw organic waste into a humus-like substance that enriches the soil and enhances carbon capture."

Warming effects of methane, the gas released by decomposing organics, "is 56 times those of carbon dioxide," Galchen adds.

Director of Dining Services Armin Alcantara says of the new compost plan he favors "anything we can control to contribute to a healthier environment."

Any one step taken can seem small, but Galchen reminds us that composting "has a significant impact on the well-being of our climate." ■

—Kathy Suri



I don't mind them recycling,  
but the more they compost, the less food we get...

## The Sound of Music

**T**HE WATERFRONT BLUES FESTIVAL, A PERENNIAL PORTLAND favorite event, moves to our neighborhood over the 4th of July weekend this year.

It is one of a series of musical events, charity promotions and other gatherings at what's now called The Lot at Zidell Yards – the chunk of waterfront property formerly the home of the barge-building Zidell Marine company, a short stroll north of Mirabella.

The property was proposed for a highly controversial long-term lease to industry giant Live Nation, but that was stalled by the Covid-19 pandemic and according to Charlene Zidell “is a thing of the past.”

Local promoters Fuller Events, owned by married couple Tyler and Christina Fuller, have leased the property through September and have been staging events during May, when their lease began.

The Waterfront Blues Festival has been a three-decade Portland favorite, and its 2021 move is anticipated to be a one-time thing, with the festival returning next year to its customary home at the Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Typically, it draws some 30,000 people for its four days of music, but this year will limit capacity to 300 a day, with patrons seated in socially distanced, picket-fenced pods of up to eight people each, according to Christina Fuller.

Before the Fullers took over in May, some April productions got the attention of local residents.

A celebration of Portland legend Darcelle, recognized by the Guinness World Records as the world's oldest drag queen, drew scattered complaints that it was too loud and ran overtime. Fuller notes that her company did not stage that event.

Fuller said she is aware of the controversy over Live Nation, which is known for big name, high-capacity, extremely loud events that have left a trail of complaints around the country.

That's not what Fuller Events does, she said.

“One of the big differences is we live here and work here and want to be welcomed by the neighborhood,” she said.

Fuller Events did request a noise code variance for the property from May 3 through June 30, from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

As an adjacent property owner, Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) representatives attended a meeting with city noise control officer Paul Van Orden.

Sara Vonde Veld, director of campus planning and real estate for OHSU, followed with a letter to Van Orden, saying:

“Without knowing the decibel levels that will be produced by events occurring in that time period, OHSU isn't in a position to support or oppose the variance. However, we did want to take the time to ensure that the City and Fuller Events understand the unique nature of those who sleep, study, teach, heal and perform research in neighboring buildings.”

OHSU's Rood Family Pavilion is the closest residential building to Zidell. It is operated by Ronald McDonald charities, housing pediatric and adult cancer patients and their families as they receive cancer treatment.

Fuller Events was expected to release a schedule of events for the property while your 3550 was at the printer.

An April edition of South Waterfront Community Relations' publication E-Current said “As events at The Lot unfold this year, neighborhood concerns regarding noise and/or traffic impacts may arise.”

It listed contact information for:

Fuller Events: [hello@thelotatzidellyards.com](mailto:hello@thelotatzidellyards.com)

Paul Van Orden, noise control officer: [Paul.VanOrden@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Paul.VanOrden@portlandoregon.gov)

City Noise Review Board: [noise@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:noise@portlandoregon.gov) ■

—Steve Casey

## YES Project Offers Funds

**T**HE INDEPENDENT CHARITY OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS TO Mirabella hourly employees has more than \$7,000 in grants to award for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Called the YES Project, the program was begun by then-residents Dave and Linda McCammon in 2013. It is administered by the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF), which reports that at the close of 2020 the YES Project had a balance of just over \$188,000.

OCF's board of directors determines a payout rate each year, generally set between 4% and 5% of fund assets.

Called “follow your dream” scholarships, YES Project grants are available to all hourly employees pursuing their studies, regardless of work assignment or field of study.

Unlike the Mirabella Foundation's scholarship program, the YES Project awards do not require approval by work supervisors or administration. The minimum award made is \$1,000.

John Branchflower and Jill Seager are the residents providing information on the scholarships to Mirabella employees and to prospective donors.

All told, OCF intends to award more than \$11 million in grants this calendar year from all the scholarship funds it manages. ■

## Residents Provide Edible Thanks

MIRABELLA'S FEBRUARY POWER OUTAGE SENT ITS STAFF members into high gear. While Portland General Electric located and installed a new transformer, some workers stayed overnight, and dining service employees searched the kitchen and nearby grocery stores for picnic foods. Carpools were organized to drive people to work.

To show staff members how much residents appreciate their efforts, a celebratory luncheon event was soon planned. Over 200 box lunches, mac and cheese, chicken enchiladas, sodas and side orders of fruit were ordered from Elephants Deli, and an army of resident bakers began home-made additions to the lunches. Forty-one Mirabella bakers produced over 2,000 cookies. Most popular cookie – chocolate chip, of course. An assembly line packaged goodies into individual-serving bags. A group of residents greeted employees as they entered Willamette Hall to thank them personally for their extra efforts. ■

—Mary Finneran



Photo by Ron Mendonca



Artwork would enliven this fourth floor hallway. Mirabella's art committee is working with Executive Director Sharon McCartney to develop an art acquisition policy. Photo by Stanley Berman.



# Merging the Mirabella Portland Foundation and Mirabella Portland – A Proposal

**E**DITOR'S NOTE: RESIDENTS ARE LIKELY TO BE ASKED TO approve abolishment of the Mirabella Portland Foundation board of directors, and incorporate the Foundation into Mirabella Portland under the control of its board.

A "yes" vote by 50% + 1 of residents voting would be required for what is being called a "merger" to go forward.

Approvals by both the Mirabella Portland board of directors and by Pacific Retirement Services (PRS), our corporate parent, are also required but are regarded as sure things.

Both Mirabella Portland and the Mirabella Portland Foundation are charitable, tax-exempt corporations.

The proposal may be presented to residents at the September semi-annual general meeting of the Residents' Association of Mirabella Portland. It is a work in progress.

The information below is excerpted from what, at press time, is the most recent draft. It is dated April 4, 2021 and comes from Barbara Gaines and Jim McGill, president and vice president, respectively, of the Residents Assn. of Mirabella Portland.

They favor the proposal. Contrary and cautionary views follow.

Your 3550 Magazine is devoting significant space to an issue that is important to Mirabella and its governance.

## Purpose

To place in context a possible change in the governance structure of the Mirabella Foundation, following is an overview of the entities and how their boards are structured:

Pacific Retirement Services, Inc. (PRS) is an Oregon nonprofit corporation which is recognized by the IRS as being exempt from federal income taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It has many subsidiary corporations (40 plus), including Mirabella Portland, whose formal legal name is Mirabella at South Waterfront.

Mirabella at South Waterfront is an Oregon nonprofit corporation, commonly referred to as Mirabella Portland (MBP). It is a subsidiary unit of PRS and is also a nonprofit, exempt from federal and Oregon income taxation. It is responsible for managing all of the MBP assets and overseeing its day-to-day operations. Its six voting members include one elected, voting Mirabella resident. In addition, currently two non-voting resident representatives (the

president and vice president of RAMP) attend and participate in its board meetings.

Mirabella Portland Foundation, Inc. ("MBPF") is also an Oregon nonprofit corporation that is recognized by the IRS as being exempt from federal income taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Its mission is to support and enrich the quality of life for Mirabella Portland residents and staff.

The mission is fulfilled primarily through donations from its residents to funds managed by MBPF.

The MBPF board has three Mirabella Portland residents, three Mirabella administrative staff, and three members from the broader Portland community. MBPF has seven separate funds totaling approximately \$862,000



*"IMPLEMENTING THESE CHANGES WON'T BE EASY. WE'RE PRETTY SET IN DOING THINGS THE WRONG WAY."*

as of September 30, 2020, the conclusion of the last fiscal year. The financial report may be found at the Miranet RAMP website (Foundation Committee >>Financial Report/Supported Funds).

The Foundation Advisory Committee (FAC) was established through the Resident Association of Mirabella Portland (RAMP) as one of several advisory committees. It is not a corporation. It comprises Mirabella volunteer residents and focuses on fundraising to support Mirabella residents and staff. It currently advises RAMP and the MBPF.

RAMP is not a formal corporation and is not part of the PRS structure. It is a creation of the residents of Mirabella Portland, serving to communicate with residents and advocate for them.



## Proposal

The current complicated structure would be simplified with a merger of MBPF into MBP.

A merger would streamline governance and reduce duplicate administrative expenses, having a positive financial impact of nearly \$10,000 a year. Doing so would also eliminate risks associated with maintaining a separate organization.

Current Foundation monies would remain obligated to their donor-specified purposes, and future donations, including any legacy gifts directed to the Foundation, would continue to be tax deductible and be used for their donor-specified purpose.

The current RAMP Foundation Advisory Committee (FAC) would remain in place and would directly advise the MBP board.

The proposal has virtually no legal or financial risks. A remote one is that in the event MBP is unable to service its debt on the building, MBPF's assets could be subject to creditor risk. This risk is highly unlikely. Such a scenario would not develop unexpectedly, thereby giving time to restructure the debt and protect MBPF assets.

As noted, a key concern is the possible loss of the voices of the three Mirabella residents serving on the current MBPF board and through them direct voices from the Mirabella FAC.

For a merger to proceed, several conditions will have to be met to ensure Mirabella residents have effective oversight of funds contributed by its residents:

1. The elected voting Mirabella resident on the MBP board remains, attends the FAC meetings, and may speak to Mirabella donor issues.

2. In addition to the attendance at all MBP board meetings by the RAMP president and vice president, the chair of the Mirabella FAC, or designee, will attend for discussions or actions related to the Foundation.

3. There will be a standing agenda item on the quarterly MBP board meetings on Mirabella Foundation matters.

4. The current flow of financial and other information to the MBPF will continue to be available to the FAC.

5. A commitment from Mirabella Portland management that it will continue to serve the Mirabella Portland board in the same way it has supported the Foundation board.

6. A commitment from PRS to maintain "Mirabella Portland Foundation" as a "doing business as" name for Mirabella Portland. This is important for the merged entity to be able to accept prior legacy donations addressed to the Foundation, so that residents can still make out checks that way with assurance that the funds will be restricted for use in accordance with donor wishes.

It is useful to note that the current "voices" are constrained (but not inappropriately so) by the fact that MBPF is a subsidiary of MBP. MBPF's scope of action is constrained to that delegated from MBP. Thus, while there are three Mirabella residents on the MBPF board, MBPF must operate within any constraints imposed by MBP. With the commitments noted above, there would be no loss of information flow to and from the Mirabella entities.

Upon approval of the merger, the implementation details will be presented to all stakeholders (board, management and Mirabella residents.) ■



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# Should Residents Dissolve the Mirabella Foundation?

by Ed Parker

SOMETIME LATER THIS YEAR, MIRABELLA RESIDENTS MAY VOTE on a proposal to disband the Mirabella Portland Foundation and transfer its funds to Mirabella Portland.

By Oregon law, Mirabella residents would have to approve before such a merger could take place.

Residents should decide whether the details of a specific merger proposal protect the funds and inspire the donor trust needed for future success. As the familiar adage says, "the devil is in the details."

We need to pay attention to those details, but first, here is some background on how the Foundation works now.

The RAMP foundation advisory committee advises both RAMP and the Foundation board of directors. The committee serves as the volunteer fundraising staff for all Foundation funds and as the staff administering the distribution of some of the funds.

The Foundation board delegates authority to the foundation committee to spend money from the cultural enrichment fund, within a board-approved budget. The cultural enrichment subcommittee, in cooperation with the RAMP programs committee, recommends each expenditure. The size of the budget depends on the committee's ability to solicit donations to the fund.

The employee scholarship subcommittee works closely with Mirabella human resources director, Anna Browne, to select candidates for employee scholarships. When the qualified employee requests exceed the funds currently available, the committee typically has raised additional funds so that all qualified employees can be supported.

For the resident assistance fund and the employee hardship fund, confidentiality requirements prohibit residents from participating in fund distribution decisions. Residents do manage the fundraising for these and other funds.

A reorganization to save a few thousand dollars in administrative costs would not be worth the risk of losing the trust of residents who have given the Foundation hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations and will continue to give generously if trust is maintained.

Trust requires good communication. If the decisions of the governing board and the reasons for them are not communicated clearly to residents or residents are not consulted in advance, trust would disappear. Loss of trust could lead to loss of donations, possibly greater than the administrative savings from merging the two corporations.

The full details of how things would work after a merger

are not yet known, but here are some of the devilish details.

## Board membership:

The Foundation has three residents as voting members on its nine-person board. Resident board members have been active on the advisory committee. The three staff members on the Foundation board, Sharon McCartney, Megan Huston and Anna Browne, typically attend foundation advisory committee meetings.

All board members have a responsibility to understand the issues and concerns of their volunteer staff and donors. Board members also have a responsibility to communicate their decisions to staff and donors; successful fundraising depends on it.

Successful communication is essential, but board membership is not the only way for board and residents to achieve mutual understanding.

The Mirabella Portland board has one resident voting member and two additional non-voting resident participants, the RAMP president and vice-president. Mirabella management

representatives also attend board meetings. That combination may not be sufficient to give residents confidence that the board understands

resident issues. It may also be necessary to have a resident designated by the chair of the advisory committee participate in board discussions of Foundation issues.

## Financial transparency:

Donor-restricted funds may be used only for donor-specified purposes. Misappropriation of funds for other purposes is a "go to jail" offense, no matter which charitable organization has legal responsibility for managing the funds.

No one suggests that any PRS or Mirabella employee, board member or volunteer would intentionally misuse





restricted funds. However, well-intentioned people may misunderstand the rules or stretch an interpretation farther than donors intended. The financial slogan “sunshine is the best disinfectant” applies here. When there is sufficient transparency that residents have access to financial decisions, errors can be discovered and corrected, and inappropriate interpretations can be adjusted.

Whatever the legal structure, financial transparency is critical to donor confidence.

#### **Unrestricted funds:**

Some donors gave money to be used for any purpose consistent with the mission of the Foundation. Investment gains go into this “unrestricted” fund. Since the mission of Mirabella Portland may not be identical to that of the Foundation, would a merger of the two permit Mirabella Portland to use those funds for any purpose it wished?

#### **Financial reporting:**

Currently, monthly financial reports on donations to and expenditures from each Foundation fund and the resulting fund balances are distributed to foundation advisory committee members and are posted on the Foundation page on Miranet. Before approval of the Foundation’s dissolution, management should commit to making the same Foundation funds’ financial information available.

#### **Role of the foundation advisory committee:**

For the fundraising process to work, there must be a close working relationship between the governing board and the foundation advisory committee that does the fundraising. Having commitments from present and future resident board members to participate regularly in advisory committee meetings may be necessary. A good relationship between the board and its volunteer fundraising staff would go a long way toward maintaining donor trust.

#### **To err is human:**

Mistakes are inevitable. After all, humans are involved. Whenever mistakes are discovered, two things should happen. One is a familiar trilogy: admit, apologize and fix the mistake. The other is to change policies or procedures to make it less likely that mistake will happen again. In financial matters, checks and balances are essential.

Known past errors have been corrected. Some errors were discovered when volunteer fundraising staff noticed that monthly financial reports were not consistent with donations they knew had been received. A new software program called Bloomerang was installed to make it easier to manage donor relations and automate donation reports, donation receipts and thank-you letters.

Error-checking is harder when resident fundraising volunteers are not permitted to see donation records for donor confidentiality reasons. Since board members have a responsibility to oversee the financial procedures and are subject to confidentiality rules, the three resident board members are the only residents allowed to examine the

records for accuracy.

Alternate error-checking procedures may be needed if the merger happens.

#### **Protect confidentiality:**

Donor confidentiality must be protected whether a merger happens or not. Donors who wish to remain anonymous can be so recorded in Bloomerang software. Donor identification would not be revealed in any summary reports.

The Foundation also has a different confidentiality issue. Some donors appreciate being recognized in donor recognition reports, while keeping confidential the amount of their donation. After a merger, none of the volunteer fundraising staff would be on the governing board and hence would no longer have access to Bloomerang. In that case, staff time should be committed to creating reports that

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*Make sure that the process for managing charitable funds is transparent ... and inspires trust.”*

---

would be helpful for fundraising activities and error checking, while protecting donor confidentiality.

#### **Employee appreciation fund:**

Currently, the employee appreciation fund is a fund within Mirabella Portland, not the Foundation. If the merger is approved, it would be desirable, but not essential, to include the employee appreciation fund in the new Mirabella Portland foundation department. It will be treated the same way the donor restricted Foundation funds are treated, including a role for the foundation advisory committee.

It would be less confusing for residents if it became one of the Foundation funds.

#### **Conclusion:**

Whether or not a merger is eventually approved, the top resident priority should be to make sure that the process for managing charitable donations is transparent to residents and inspires resident trust. Without that, the funds will not thrive.

I don’t believe residents have yet received enough detailed information and management commitments about how the funds would be managed, post-merger. Thankfully, no one appears to be rushing the process.

Until there is a definitive detailed proposal and management commitments for transparent post-merger operations, there is no decision to be made.

Rather than arguing over whether to merge or not, let’s have a constructive dialogue between residents and management to achieve consensus on a plan that maintains resident confidence in the management of Foundation funds. ■

# Why the “Merger” Is a Bad Idea

By Steve Casey

**A**S YOU CONSIDER MAKING THE MIRABELLA PORTLAND Foundation a department of Mirabella the corporation, be careful what you wish for.

The move is touted as a streamlining of the Foundation and a money-saver.

Yet a “merger” risks seriously wounding the Foundation itself.

Some fear it would give Mirabella’s board of directors and administration a million dollar slush fund to dispense on projects they like, even if those don’t meet the purposes of the Foundation or are unfaithful to donor intent.

“Merger” proponents say it would be more efficient and save up to \$10,000 a year in administrative duplication.

That’s no bargain if it is eclipsed by lost donations as disenchanted donors close their checkbooks.

An important note at the outset: The people advocating this “merger” – our neighbors and administrators alike – are acting in what they see as the best interests of the entire Mirabella community.

Some of us just think they are dead wrong.

Any merger is at least months away and would require the affirmative vote of Mirabella residents.

In present form, it should be rejected. Here’s why:

***It puts the foxes in charge of protecting the henhouse.***

The interests of Mirabella Portland are not the same as the interests of the Foundation.

Management or the board will want to do something they see as good for the community but have no funds for it, and look longingly at the pool of Foundation money.

We know that will happen because already we have seen it twice. (More about that in a moment.)

The latest, evolving draft

proposal at press time was presented to the Foundation Advisory Committee by resident association president and vice president Barbara Gaines and Jim McGill. Executive director Sharon McCartney supports the plan, although she told 3550 it is not a priority.

The proposed acquisition is called a “merger” by proponents. It scraps the Foundation board of directors, all of whom owe a fiduciary duty of loyalty to act solely in the interest of the Foundation and to protect your donated money.

Three elected residents now serve on that board. No residents would replace them. There would be no decision-maker with a duty of loyalty to the Foundation alone.

Spending decisions would rest in the hands of the Mirabella Portland board, largely a creature of parent corporation Pacific Retirement Services (PRS).

The Mirabella board has one elected resident voting member, whose loyalty must be to Mirabella Portland itself, with Foundation issues being but a collateral duty.

Thus, resident (a/k/a “donor”) voting power on Foundation matters goes from three to less than one.

The rest of the Mirabella board is made up of four “outside” members, most of whom serve on other PRS-related boards. They are all unpaid volunteers with valuable relevant expertise. Asking them to be faithful both to the desires of Mirabella and to Foundation donors is unfair to them and to us.

***You deserve to have use of your money decided openly.***

Discussions of how your charitable donations are spent should be as open as the sky on a summer day, not tucked away in a closed-door board meeting with information shared, at best, only after the fact.

We already have transparency problems with the Foundation and Mirabella boards, and this is an opportunity to solve them, not make them worse.

Lynn Johnson is vice chair of the PRS board and chair of its investment committee, chair of the Mirabella Portland board and the Mirabella Portland Foundation board. He also serves on the board of Holladay Park Plaza.





He is approachable and responsive, with a wealth of experience in finance and nonprofit management.

In a telephone interview, Lynn told 3550 he believes Mirabella and Foundation board meetings are all publicly announced in advance, it's okay with him if residents attend, and minutes of those meetings are freely available to residents: "I'd be highly surprised if those things aren't available to any resident who wants."

Surprise:

Meetings of the two boards are not publicly announced, residents are not permitted to attend as observers, how to get minutes is not generally known. They are not posted on Miranet, had been deemed "confidential" but now are available from executive assistant Christina Dye.

The Mirabella Seattle Foundation, with a corporate-control governance structure similar to ours, also has closed board meetings but at least publishes its minutes on their Miranet, according to board chair David Webber, an attorney and Mirabella Seattle resident.

Closed meetings here are justified in part by claims of "confidential" matters, but the rare truly confidential item could be discussed in executive session, rather than barring residents from meetings about their money.

It is also justified in part by convenience of board members.

"Board members of both the Mirabella Portland board and Mirabella Foundation board are unpaid volunteers and we are sensitive of their time," Sharon told 3550.

Also, she said, having observers at the meetings can inhibit sharing opinions; "views might be withheld due to public pressure."

Decision-maker convenience and timidity are not generally accepted reasons to keep meetings private.

Transparency would require only a simple policy change.

**Given that the Mirabella and Foundation boards act behind closed doors, does the proposed "merger" really lessen transparency?**

Yes.

The Foundation board has three resident voting members, three "community" members and three Mirabella staff members. It's easy for the resident members to be outvoted, but if the Mirabella-PRS majority disregards resident directors' concerns, those directors still have a bully pulpit.

They can report on board activity at RAMP meetings, in 3550 articles, in public forums, shining light on decisions made in the dark.

Under the "merger" proposal, transparency would become as opaque as a boarded-up downtown window.

**The "merger" is the wrong solution to a real problem.**

We should be grateful this is before us now, as it demonstrates our Foundation board is anything but independent.

"Merger" proponents themselves tell us that.

They say the Foundation's board of directors is surpluse – totally controlled by the Mirabella board, which in turn is controlled by PRS, so we really aren't giving up control because we don't have any.

Say what?

It makes no sense to strangle the life out of the last shred of residents' control over money they have donated.

There are better ways to strengthen the Foundation. (See "Solutions," below.)

The most important asset the Foundation or any charity has is its integrity and the donor confidence that integrity fosters. This proposal drives a stake through the heart of that confidence.

We like and respect executives in our administration; they do difficult jobs exceedingly well. We benefit enormously from services (think "Covid shots") we receive from

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***The most important asset the Foundation or any charity has is its integrity and donor confidence. This proposal drives a stake through the heart of that confidence.***

---

PRS.

But why should we just hand them total control over a huge pool of our donated money?

Think of a reason? Me neither.

**The proposal promises you a "voice" – but not a vote.**

Voting resident representatives should make actual decisions about our money, not mere recommendations, and certainly not just provide "input" to people whose primary allegiance is to Mirabella or PRS.

**Is the conflict of interest fear reasonable or alarmist?**

We know the answer to that one.

Exhibit A is hiring a consultant to make staff and residents play nice together.

Last year, the Foundation launched a highly successful drive for donations to the Employee Hardship Fund. The pitch was that although administration had found ways to keep all employees working during Covid, they still had

(see Merger p. 14)

*(from Merger p. 13)*

financial problems, as spouses and roommates were not so lucky.

Generous residents donated \$54,000 to the hardship fund in 2020, far more than the need.

Motivated in part by social turmoil surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement and hearing that some staffers felt disrespected by residents or fellow employees,

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*Discussions of how your charitable donations are spent should be as open as the sky on a summer day.*

---

Sharon bypassed the Foundation Advisory Committee and asked the Foundation board to hire a Chicago consultant for \$16,000.

The consultant would lead sessions with staff and residents and, presumably, ease whatever tensions surfaced, although follow-up work would cost extra.

She would be paid from the Employee Hardship Fund.

Glitch: the hardship fund's charter said only that it is "Established to assist Mirabella Portland employees who face unforeseen *financial* hardship." (Emphasis added.)

The consultant's sensitivity training didn't fit.

So they cobbled on a one-sentence addition: "Funds may also be used to collectively benefit the staff of Mirabella Portland."

That is unrestrained mission creep that could be used to justify buying each Mirabella employee a 70-inch flat screen television on the theory that it would make them happier. It is doubtful donors had that in mind when making their gifts.

Indeed, soliciting donations for one purpose and spending the proceeds on something never dreamed of is guaranteed to send prospective donors running.

At its April 2021 foundation committee meeting, one member asked, reasonably: Whatever its merits, why is this a Foundation expense?

At its May meeting, the committee was expected to discuss asking the Foundation board to reverse the decision to pay the consultant from the hardship fund and to strip out the added-on "collective benefit" language.

Sharon supports that resolution, telling 3550 "we made a mistake and we are fixing it," and said she will not pay the consultant with Foundation money.

A less controversial use of Foundation funds involved a \$14,000 purchase of a Covid testing machine.

It's easy to make a case that the foundation board didn't do its job, but that's hindsight. The governance goal should be to prevent doing it again.

## Our friend was unique and wonderful. The funeral wasn't.

It was generic and templated, not a true reflection of their life at all.

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- To get advice and inspiration to create a unique funeral



We get one chance to say goodbye

[Great-goodbyes.com](http://Great-goodbyes.com) will help you make your farewell unique and memorable.



Go to [great-goodbyes.com](http://great-goodbyes.com)



### Potential Solutions

You may have more. Here's a start:

The **strongest solution** would be to cut the cord binding the Foundation to Mirabella Portland and PRS, establishing a truly independent board, the majority of its directors being Mirabella residents.

"Merger" proponents say that's legally and practically

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### *The interests of Mirabella Portland are not the same as the interests of the Foundation.*

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difficult, and might mean the Foundation would bear all costs of its operation.

A **second option**, from current Foundation board member Larry Levy, would expand the Mirabella Portland board itself, to include three elected residents, not just one as there is now.

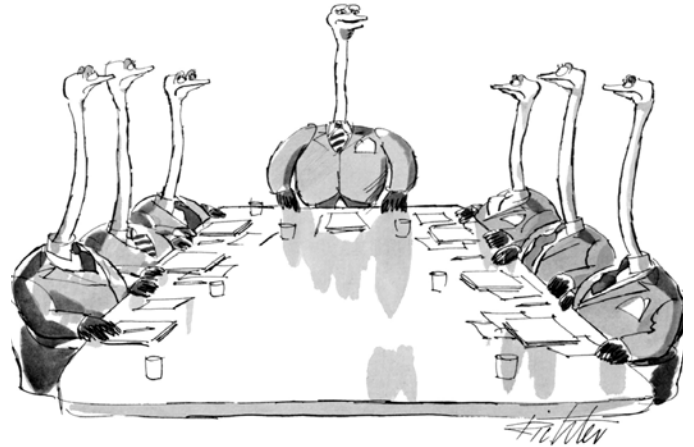
Eliminating oversight by the three residents on the Foundation board and leaving all Foundation decisions about our donated money up to a Mirabella board of overwhelmingly PRS-linked directors should be a non-starter.

Adding two more residents to the Mirabella board would not yield a majority, but would provide some reasonable resident authority.

A **third option** would be to give the Mirabella board investment authority over Foundation money, but require a resident-dominated board to approve any expenditure.

Foundation money then could be part of a contemplated PRS-wide package of funds from many communities, creating a pool large enough to provide enhanced donor benefits the Foundation is too small to offer alone.

But would still guard against mission creep. ■



**"The motion has been made and seconded that we stick our heads in the sand."**

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Photo by Ron Mendonca

## Lynda & Richard Mounts

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by Pamela Lindholm-Levy

**"**EVERY TIME I WAS DRIVING AROUND D.C. I CRIED WHEN I heard John Denver sing "Rocky Mountain High" on the radio," Mirabella resident Lynda Mounts says of her and husband Richard's first year in Washington, D.C., after moving from Boulder.

Lynda had a new law degree and Richard a Ph.D, both from the University of Colorado. They thought they'd go back to Boulder in a year but never did. Lynda says that at retirement they were "planning to get a condo in D.C., and then she had a baby," referring to the Mounts' daughter, Elizabeth, who lives in Portland. The baby, Parker, will be 2 years old in October. Lynda and Richard have been in Portland since August of 2020 and at Mirabella since Sept. 15.

Lynda jumped right into fitness and exercise activities as soon as she and Richard were settled in their Mirabella apartment. From reading Musings while still in D.C., Lynda looked forward to the many wellness classes. Soon the

## Resident Profile: Lynda & Richard Mounts: Lives in Motion

chair of the residents' committee asked her to take over that role, which was a perfect fit. Lynda had been a runner from the time she moved to Los Angeles to attend graduate school at UCLA. She loved running because it did not involve teams, equipment, schedules or anyone except her. Later in life, when her knees told her to find another way to keep in condition, she and a group of women friends in Washington hired a trainer to help them offset their less-than-active-work days. Lynda believes that fitness is important for life at any age and wants Mirabella's exercise program to be varied enough to allow and encourage everyone who wants to exercise and keep fit to do so at their own level. She supports Wellness Coordinator Jamie Mathieu's management of the exercise program to that end.

Richard Mounts' family left Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1956 to settle in the San Fernando Valley. Richard went from one new school to another as the population grew rapidly. "I didn't love it," he says of being transplanted

from homogeneous Cedar Rapids to diverse Southern California. Nevertheless, he adapted: he ran the half-mile on his high school track team and became a cheerleader, too.

After graduating from UC Santa Barbara, Richard joined the Peace Corps and was assigned to teach middle-school-level English in Senegal, where French is the dominant language. From first learning enough to get by, he found the language a continuing passion. His Peace Corps take-away message: "I could live outside the United States and be quite comfortable."

His affinity for French led Richard to Alliance Francaise, which promotes the culture and language worldwide. Through their programs he is certified to teach French at the highest level. At present, Richard is learning Italian and is advanced enough to read books in that language.

"California Dreaming" was Lynda's idea of California life when she left her native Bronx in the late 1960s for Los Angeles. There, she met a guy who seemed so...California. She heard he had taken a surfboard to his Peace Corps assignment and rode a motorcycle.

In 1968 without knowing each other they took the same political science graduate seminar. Richard says, "There were two women in the class with great legs and the other one was married."

Lynda and Richard were married in 1969 and decided to leave California a year later after they were both accepted to graduate school at the University of Colorado. In Boulder, Lynda ran, Richard biked, and they both cross-county skied. She clerked for the chief justice of the Colorado Supreme Court. He earned his Ph.D. They moved to D.C. when Lynda began working for Colorado's U.S. Sen. Floyd Haskell, who served from 1974-80.

D.C. remained the Mounts' home even after Sen. Haskell left office. Lynda's law career included 20 years in private practice with the D.C. office of a big New York law firm. Later she worked with a trade association, and in the Clinton administration from 1999-2001 she was general counsel of the presidential advisory commission on Holocaust assets in the United States.

Richard spent one year teaching political science and public administration and worked for the conference of mayors and cities. Finding this work unsatisfying, he entered law school at American University while Lynda supported the family.

As a lawyer Richard found fulfilling work at the FDIC, at the Resolution Trust Corporation, which was tasked with liquidating assets of defunct savings and loan associations after the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s, and

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(see Mounts p. 18)



*(from Mounts p. 17)*

doing pension fund enforcement at the U.S. Department of Labor.

Photography became more and more important to Richard. He had taken a photography class in college, and had pieces in student art shows. He took photos when he was in the Peace Corps and later in D.C., his interest and skill growing over the years.

Bergamo, Italy, tops Richard's list of most-photogenic places, with landscape his subject of choice. He says that he sometimes tries street scenes, "But I end up feeling like a spy and more than a little guilty."

When he learned that one of the participants in a show at New York's Museum of Modern Art had posted a photograph every day on social media, Richard was inspired to do the same on Instagram and has been at it for three years. He says it helps him concentrate on being the best he can. During Covid he has been taking a Zoom photography class from Paris, and finds there are participants from all over the world. All his work is digital now.

After retirement in 2012, Lynda joined the Smithsonian women's committee, which uses proceeds of an annual

juried crafts show to provide grants to the Smithsonian's vast museum network, its research facilities and the National Zoo, owned and managed by the Smithsonian.

Lynda says the show she planned, organized and managed was the last live show before Covid, with 120 artists bringing their best to an event that has an almost 40-year history.

Lynda was a member of a giving circle in D.C. which provided grants administered by the Washington Women's Foundation to provide at-risk girls in the city and surrounding areas programs such as exercise, financial literacy, core science classes and teaching skills needed to apply for internships.

When Richard retired he got involved with, and is now on the board of, a non-profit that owns 85 units of affordable housing in D.C., plus some vacant land with potential for more. This group keeps him busy even as he has moved all the way across the country.

When the myriad activities in Portland – music, art, theater, lectures – go live again, Lynda and Richard look forward to them and to using the public transportation so convenient to Mirabella.

And of course so much more time with Parker. ■



Photo by Richard Mounts

## Portland Restaurants Rebound

### Al Hawr: It's a Family Affair

**A**SKED HOW AL HAWR HAS SURVIVED A YEAR OF COVID, the restaurant's manager Louai Hassan says, "It's all family." He works as bartender and serves, his mom cooks while cousins work in the kitchen and his dad and sister do "everything."

Al Hawr got "a little government help," the landlord cut back on the rent, and the restaurant closed for the month of March, 2020. But the family's willingness to work hard has proved the critical component in its success.

"We didn't make money but we survived," Hassan says, adding, "Credit cards helped."

Customers who have sampled Al Hawr's creamy hummus served with warm pita bread, its herbed potatoes or mixed grilled meats will be glad the family-run restaurant has prevailed.

It has added outside tables, more likely to be used with the approach of longer days and warmer weather. ■

### Higgins Improvises, Returns

**H**IGGINS RESTAURANT, WHOSE DINNER MENU MAY FEATURE FILET mignon, Dungeness crab cakes and mushroom curry with samosas, was closed from March to June, 2020

by Covid. "We didn't have any money," co-owner Paul Mallory says.

Federal and state assistance helped the restaurant, a go-to place for special meals, reopen. "We've been scrambling," Mallory says talking about a "different concept of take-out," with specialty boxes for holidays like Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve and events like the Super Bowl. It was "a different concept of take-out," Mallory says.

The restaurant's Piggins, an outdoors event with tables and chairs set up on the Oregon Historical Society's patio, was especially successful. A deluxe food truck with a full bar served steaks, fish and sandwiches. Mallory looks forward to repeating this successful event starting in July.

Open for dinner five nights a week, Higgins plans to start serving lunch this summer. ■

### Huber's Survives the Pandemic

**"W**E THANK THE FEDS," SAYS HUBER'S OWNER James Louie of Portland's oldest restaurant's surviving Covid. Both the Paycheck Protection Plan under the Cares Act and the more recent Restaurant Reactivation Program helped Huber's, founded in 1879, survive.

Louie encourages people to come. "Restaurants are safer than going to a supermarket," he maintains, mentioning Huber's five outside tables and tables spaced six feet apart.

With summer close at hand, residents who remember plates stacked high with turkey or Spanish coffee poured in a dark stream into waiting cups below may want to plan an excursion to this beautiful – and most likely not as crowded, – landmark. ■

—Nancy Moss



Dining room and bar at Huber's, Portland's oldest restaurant.

**A**RTIST, DRAGON BOAT RACER, FUTURE CONTRACTOR, raiser of hens, Dominic Harris is excited about all his avocations.

As the only renovations technician, Dom helps Ricky Jones, Mirabella renovations coordinator, return empty apartments to pristine condition for new Mirabella residents to call home. With his many different construction skills Dom works on plumbing, cabinets, flooring, dry wall, painting, appliances, "and most anything I see that needs fixing." He says he averages about 14,000 steps a day at work.

"I was destined to be involved in construction," Dom says. He began his career at age 12 by sweeping out condominium units that his dad was constructing, but he had no intention of becoming a construction worker. After Dom finished high school his dad started his own company, Albina Construction Company, and Dom, along with his younger brother and sister, became part of the family operation. "I think he started the company so he could have more time with his kids," Dom says.

At age 31, Dom has now turned his attention to management. Besides studying for a contractor's license, he is taking online classes at Portland Community College for an associate's degree in construction management before transitioning to Oregon State University for a BS in construction engineering management.

"I may be able to do the whole degree online and not have to go to Corvallis," he says. "I have received a scholarship from the Mirabella Foundation which paid for about one-third of a term. I am very grateful for that." His ultimate goal is, like his dad, to start his own construction management firm.

Dom is part of a longtime Portland family. "Growing up, I hung around City Hall a lot because my mom used to work for Portland City Commissioner Erik Sten, and my Grandma Gloria Harris ran for a city council spot," Dom remembers. His mom now works as assistant to the director of the Portland Water Bureau.

He graduated from De La Salle North Catholic High School, home of the Knights, where he lettered in all four varsity sports. He is still devoted to a variety of team sports, depending on the time of year. In addition to dragon boat racing he plays rugby for the Portland Pigs Rugby Club a part of USA Rugby in the Pacific Northwest Conference. He also cycles for Club Roule Cycling Team, racing various kinds of bikes and competing on a USA national level. "I have three bikes in all and my mountain bike is built for my individual body."

Dom has loved the outdoors since he was in Boy Scout Pack 137, with his dad as troop leader. "Now every weekend I do something outdoors, hiking, camping, kayaking.

I try out wilderness equipment and new survival products for companies and write them up for 'Dome Wild' on Instagram."

"When I was a child I used drawing as an escape," he remembers. After high school he designed many tattoos and had them applied to his body by a friend who had become a certified tattoo artist. Some are representational: Frankenstein, peacock, rose, and, as Dom is a big fan of Star Wars, R2-D2 and C-3PO.

Now he has a graphic design company, Project Creative NW, and works on commission, consulting with clients for graphic design, T-shirts, paintings for local businesses, art for houses and murals for restaurants. "I don't have any formal training in art, but I just keep learning and evolving." One of his online names is Domthemaartist.

Dom lives alone in a house with a garden in Northeast Portland. He keeps three beautiful Blue Andalusian chickens in a converted woodshed. They supply him with eggs, but he also considers them pets. He also has two beloved small dogs. Pablo is a mix of French bulldog and

## Staff Profile: Dominic Harris: Master of Many Trades

American bulldog, a breed recognized 25 years ago. Vader is a pit bull and mini-schnauzer mix. "The chickens are somewhat bigger than the dogs, so they all get along well." He is looking for a pig and a goat to complete the menagerie.

Practicing and racing with his dragon boat team, the Wasabi Burn Club, on the Willamette River, Dominic Harris sometimes wondered about a tall, skinny building in the burgeoning South Waterfront district. He got the chance to become acquainted with Mirabella when he accepted the position of renovations technician.

"I started at Mirabella March 16, 2020, the same day it locked down. I've never seen the building run normally," he says. After working in construction on older Portland buildings, he loved the idea of working on a new building with new systems.

Dom has a small office on Mirabella's parking level that is decorated with his artwork. He can often be seen around Mirabella, sometimes dressed in his whites, swinging a paint can or carrying a piece of construction equipment. "I really enjoy working at Mirabella," he says. "The residents are very friendly." ■





Photo by Robert French

**Dominic Harris**



# Meet The Vera's New Neighbor

by Pete Swan

**A** NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON THE SOUTH Waterfront has become more visible. Since The Vera, a 13-story building on the corner of Moody and River Parkway, succeeded as affordable housing, its developer, Bridge Housing, has now broken ground for a companion building, as yet unnamed, just east of the first building.

Bridge Housing, a non-profit headquartered in San Francisco, owns 23 affordable-housing complexes in San Francisco, another 28 elsewhere in the Bay Area, and three others – The Abigail, The Sitka and The Ramona – here in Portland, plus one in Hillsboro and one in Cornelius.

Designed by Ankrom Moisan Architects and built by Hoffman Construction, The Vera's name pays homage to Portland's former mayor, Vera Katz. Bridge Housing CEO Cynthia Parker called Katz "an inspirational leader whose commitment to public service and vibrant cities improved the lives of many."

Qualifications to lease an apartment in The Vera are income-driven: Tenants are those whose income is less than 30 percent of the Portland-area median income (AMI) and those whose income is less than 60 percent of AMI. To use

a two-bedroom unit as an example, those at the under-30-percent level pay \$511 monthly while those at the under-60-percent level pay \$1272.

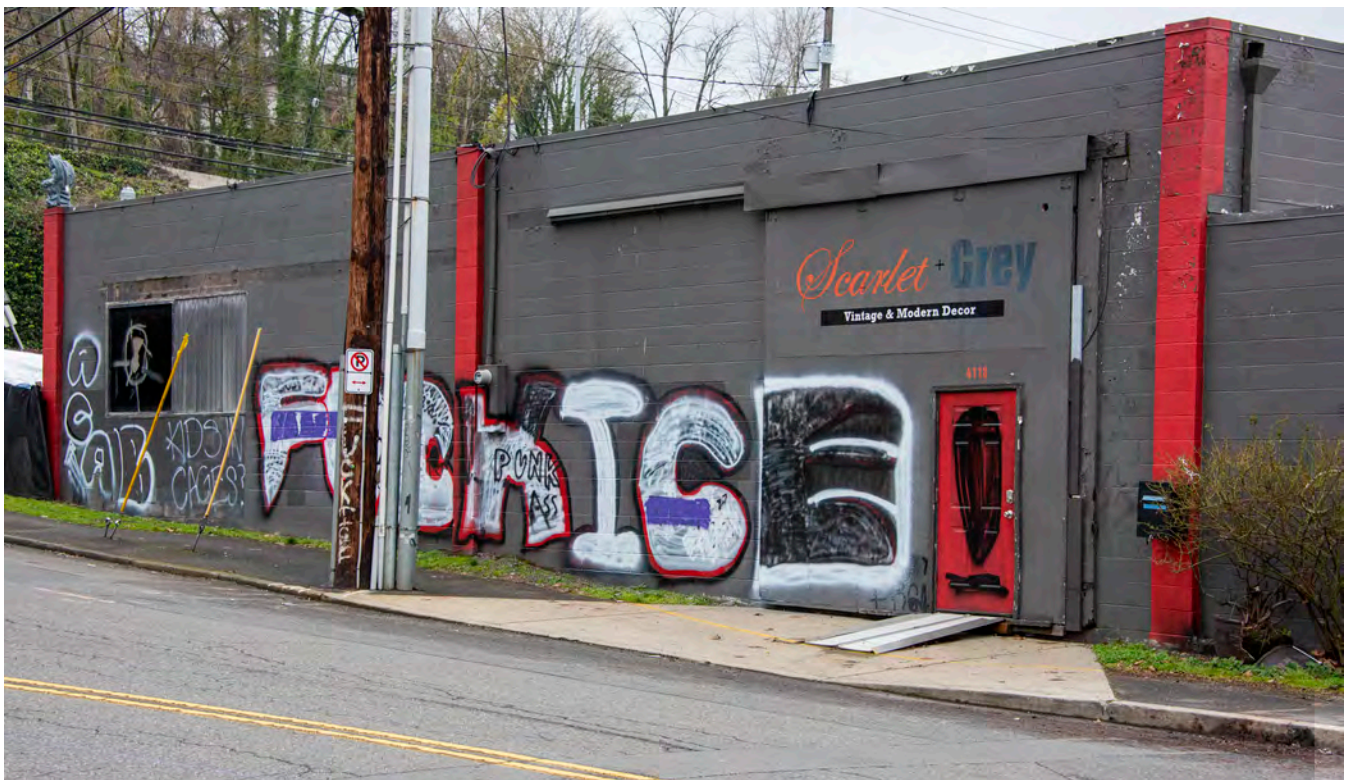
The Vera has a total of 203 units. Of those, 90 go to those in the lowest AMI tier, and 10 more to previously homeless veterans benefitting from the Veterans' Affairs' Supportive Housing Program. The other 103 are for higher (< 60% of AMI) tier occupants. Several of the units are designed for those with visual or mobility impairments.

The building has won a LEED "Gold" rating; 88% of the construction debris and waste was recycled. Eco-friendly features include low-energy-consuming light emitting diode (LED) lighting, increased insulation, low-E double-paned windows, Energy Star appliances, low-flow plumbing and no (or low) volatile organic compounds paint.

Like The Vera, the new building will be entirely affordable housing and was designed by the Ankron firm. Its contractor is Walsh Construction.

The new building will be somewhat lower than The Vera and will feature brick cladding. There will be 178 units with 61 studios, 67 1BRs, 32 2BRs (including two for resident managers) and 18 3BRs. There will be 67 parking spaces.

Walsh's project manager, Brian Johnson, says completion is scheduled for the autumn quarter of 2022. ■



A Bancroft Street building demonstrates the destruction from repeated protests. Photo by Robert French

# Portland Diary

by Nancy Moss

## I

**W**ALKING IN BACK OF THE MIRABELLA ON THE Greenway's top pedestrian path, on a fine, almost-spring day, I hear a bike approaching from behind me, accelerating. Cautious, I step aside. The bicycle rider, a young man in helmet and top-of-the-line gear, flaps a hand to me as he passes. He rides down the steps ahead, past the designated bicycle path, to the bottom.

Did his gesture mean "I'm sorry," I wonder, or "I can do this; I'm young."

## II

A friend went to Blue Star Donuts for dessert to find them out of everything but apple fritters. "Today's your lucky day," the clerk said. "Someone called to say they were not coming in to town after all; give their order to the next person who walks in. It's all paid for."

The universe briefly smiled at my friend.

## III

As I walk up to the Emery's storefronts to check on business there, the corner that housed Piizzicato stands empty.

Past that a worker is busily washing the windows of "Three Paws" pet supply store. A hopeful sign. In Ecrú stationers I buy a couple of "Thinking of you cards," for friends whose recovery will be longer than "Get well soon" suggests.

Asked how Ecrú has survived Covid, its owner, LeeAnn Dolan says, "the neighborhood has been supportive." She thinks most businesses have outlasted Covid.

The last storefront, Cha Cha Cha Taqueria, is open. It's running at 25% capacity, a worker tells me. With its two small tables and a larger picnic table outside in the sun, with warmer days coming and the trees sprouting new leaves, its business may pick up.

## IV

My friend David, a customer service rep for Portland Streetcar, reports the following conversation between two passengers, one of whom had tried to buy a ticket with her credit card from the machine, which only takes bills and coins.

"Well, I don't have cash."

"You're in luck, because the fare inspector just got off."

"How do you know they're the fare inspector?"

"They wear a bright yellow vest, they carry a clipboard and they're very nice, 'cause this is Oregon." ■



Dr. Mila Ioussifova is a residency-trained optometrist with a diverse background and widespread training in comprehensive eye care. A graduate with honors from New England College of Optometry, Dr. Mila maintains and practices the highest standards in optometric practice. Her approach to patient care is systemic with an emphasis on ocular nutrition and disease prevention. She is passionate about eye care and health, and she takes the time to educate her patients on how to maintain healthy eyes.

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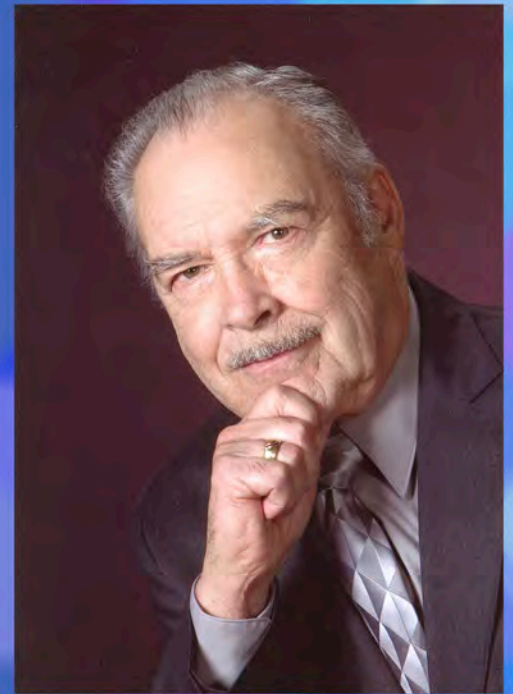
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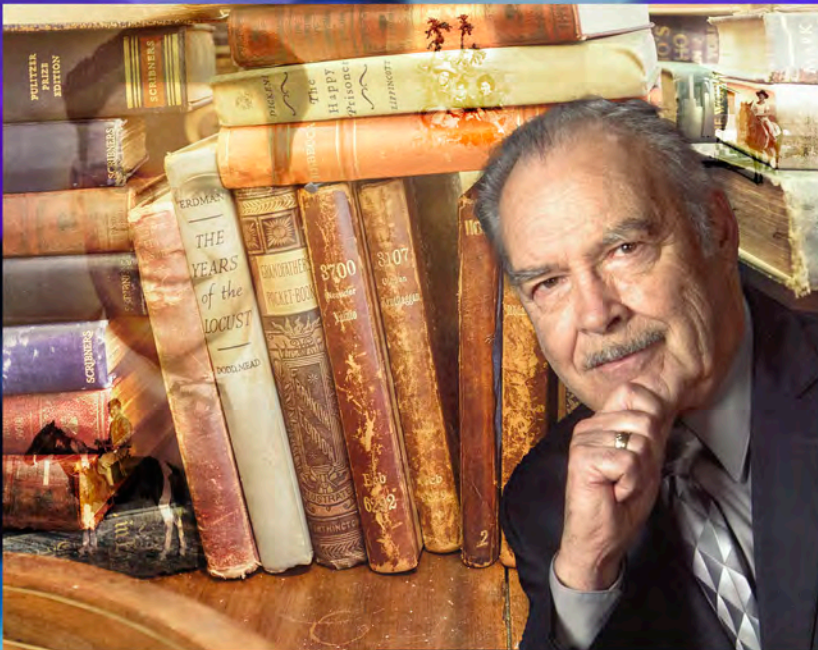
# What did you do during COVID?

*I spent my time experimenting with different ways to show a portrait, using different backgrounds, various filters, blend modes and many other techniques. The following pages will show you the results of my experimentation. I hope you enjoy them.*

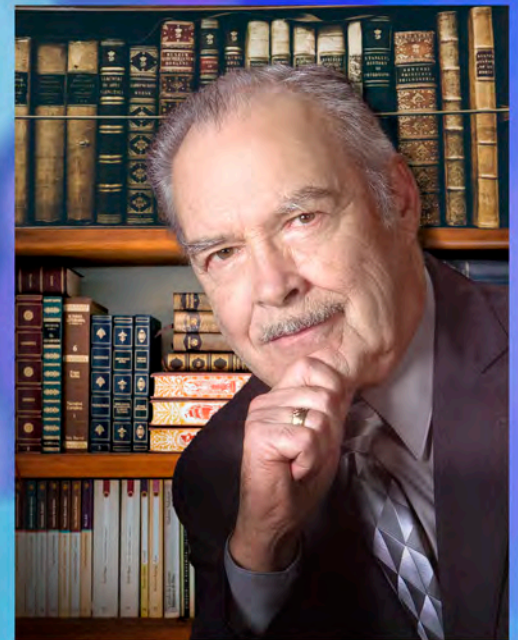
*Ron Mendonca*



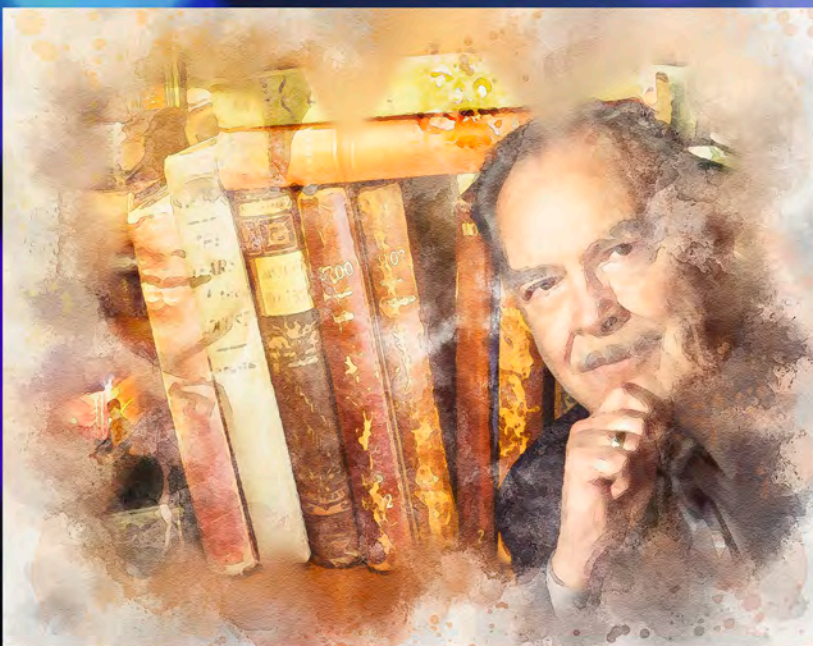
Original Photo



Multiple photos for background



Simple background



Watercolor Effects





THE EXTRUDED MAN  
Notice the extruded background



BIRD LADY  
Multiple backgrounds, bird and fog

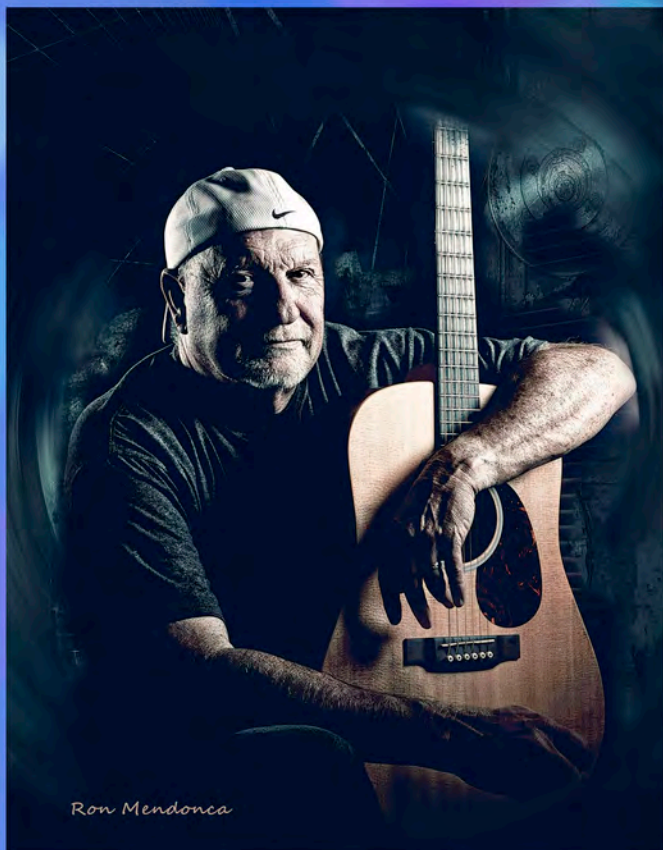


HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN  
Simple background and lighting





ENCHANTED LADY  
Complex backgrounds, stars, lighting and blurs



DEAN THE GUITAR MAN  
Low key, spin blurs and lighting



SOUL MUSIC  
Multiple backgrounds and brush work

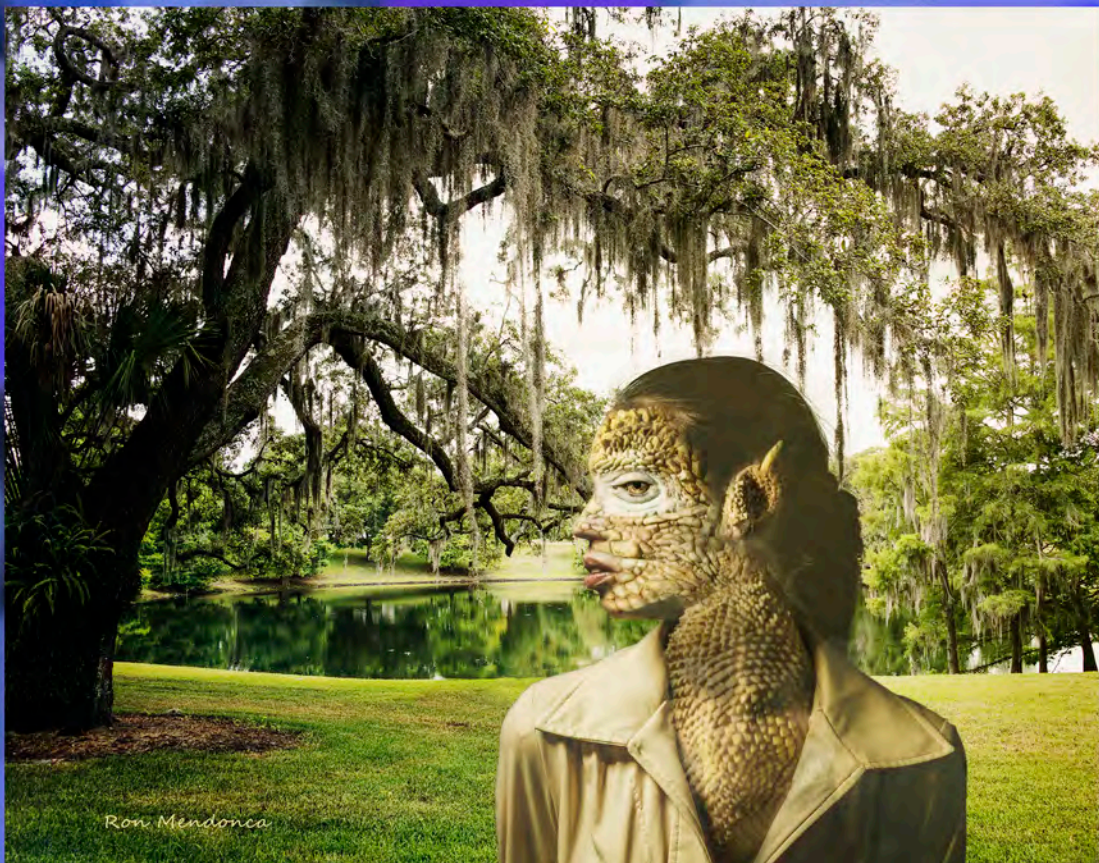




**BALLOON LADY**  
Multiple backgrounds and brush work



**LIFE IS ART**  
Backgrounds, brushes and manipulation



**LADY FROM THE LAGOON**  
Notice her skin





MUSICAL TRYP TICH  
Notice the musical instruments



READY FOR BATTLE  
Backgrounds, textures and brush work

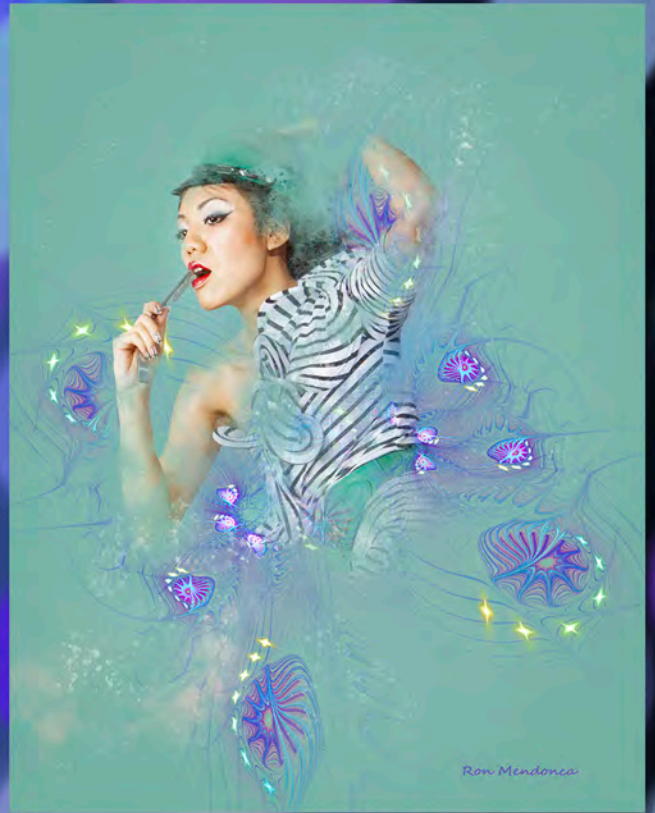


VEGAS GAL  
Blends, Textures and backgrounds





**I WONDER**  
Brush work and textures



**DREAMING**  
Brush work and vectors



**TUMBLEWEED**  
Manipulation, lighting, textures and brushwork



# Practice for the Big One?

by Ed Parker

**R**EMEMBER THE MID-FEBRUARY TRANSFORMER EXPLOSION THAT left us without electric power or water for more than a day?

That was a rehearsal for the next Cascadia subduction zone earthquake that will leave us with without electricity or water for several weeks or months.

What did the rehearsal teach us, besides confirming that we are not as ready as we should be?

Before reviewing the lessons, here is a summary of what to expect when "The Big One" happens.

Oregon's earthquake risk is different from that in California. Big California earthquakes are typically magnitude 6 or 7, last for about 30 seconds, and happen frequently enough that people have learned to prepare.

Oregon's last big earthquake was in 1700. That Cascadia quake happens regularly every 300 to 500 years. It is always a magnitude 8 or 9, which makes it 1,000 times stronger than a big California quake, and shakes for four to five minutes. A reasonable recovery plan for residents of a facility damaged in a California earthquake would be evacuation to different accommodations until repairs can be made and utility services restored.

Mirabella Portland is expected to survive so we can shelter in place, but without heat, electricity, water, plumbing or access to telephone or internet service for at least several weeks. Evacuation is unlikely because it will be hard to find a place to go or a way to get there.

Portland bridges are not expected to be usable, and we are not near a highway with a reasonable priority for service restoration. Even if transportation were available, the chance of finding alternate accommodation quickly is slim because massive damage will extend from northern

California to British Columbia.

Mirabella is anchored deeply enough to survive, but it is located on a flood plain that will liquify in a major quake, so going outside is not a great option. Staying inside will also provide protection from falling debris.

So, what did we learn in February?

First, we need light. Some residents lit candles, which they should never do after an earthquake. Aftershocks are likely. Candles add the risk of fire to an already bad situation. Most people had flashlights and batteries. Some had solar puff lanterns that are powered by sunlight (even on cloudy days) and will continue to work after batteries run out.

Second, we need water. Resident emergency preparedness leaders recommend 21 gallons per person, a three-week supply. In February, one resident said she was almost reduced to opening a can of chicken broth to get some liquid to drink, but a salty drink is not the best thirst quencher.

Third, we need toilet bags that can be inserted into our existing toilets when we will not be able to flush. Emergency preparedness leaders recommend "Go Anywhere" toilet kits and will help residents obtain them. We don't want to survive the earthquake and then risk dying of dysentery because of the public health hazard of improper storage of fecal waste.

Fourth, we need a three-week supply of food that doesn't need cooking. Peanut butter and crackers, anyone?

For a complete list of recommendations, go to the RAMP tab on Miranet, scroll down and click on the emergency preparedness icon, then look for the personal checklist link under the "Planning for the Big One" heading. You might also want to look at the Emergency Preparedness Guide in that section. ■

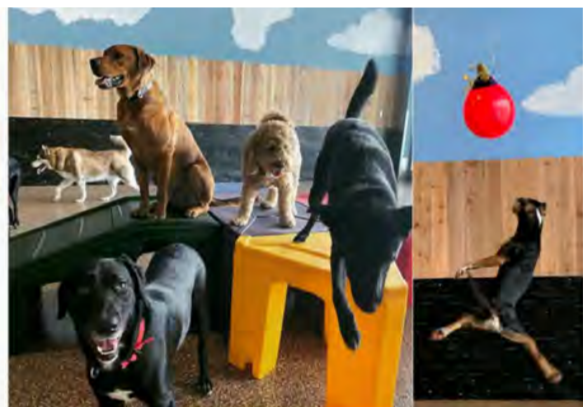


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# How Does Your Garden Grow?

by Pamela Lindholm-Levy

MARGARET ATWOOD WRITES, "IN THE SPRING, AT THE end of the day you should smell like dirt." Atwood knows that smelling like dirt and having to scrub it out from under your fingernails appeals even to apartment dwellers. The developers of the South Waterfront neighborhood knew that as well; they set aside a large space for gardeners.

Their first garden, located where the Osprey now sits, included more than 100 raised beds built by the gardeners. It was thriving when Mirabella welcomed the first residents, and some of those residents dug right in.

When it became clear a building would replace the old, a new garden space opened the next spring for people who lived or worked in the neighborhood. A retired architect designed the layout in what's known as Block 33 at the corner of Gaines and Macadam.

Since OHSU, which owns the land, had no immediate plans for the property, it became the South Waterfront Community Garden and is independent of the Portland Parks and Recreation program which manages 57 community gardens around the city.



Photo by Richard Mounts

Block 33 is probably the site of an old building. A foundation or retaining wall remnant forms the west perimeter. The north end falls away steeply to a parking lot, but there was enough land south to Gaines and sloping down toward Moody that the garden's potential was clear. A neighborhood resident who knew heavy equipment used



Photo by Richard Mounts

one of his machines to make the upper garden level and dig trenches for water lines.

Pete Collins, executive director of South Waterfront community relations, and local volunteer gardeners contributed time and expertise in building new raised beds, piping the water system, spreading cedar chips in the pathways and erecting fencing. OHSU and Zidell contributed funds for the materials needed to build out this new garden, and OHSU still pays for the water.

The new garden was ready for planting, but not as gardeners know it today. The beds were empty. The pioneers, so to speak, had to fill their own and really could have used teams of oxen to tote the loads of soil up the hill.

The popularity of this new garden led to beds being made on the flat east side of the property in time for planting in 2016. Here, two beds are reserved for the children at the Montessori school on South Bond Avenue. Grey's Landing apartment residents also have reserved beds. Collins calls the community garden "a good program." The 30 applicants on the waiting list for beds demonstrate its popularity.

Collins and a few gardener-helpers do an astonishing amount of maintenance work to keep the garden attractive and functioning. Repairing and replacing the bed frames, which are 4 feet by 10 feet and 16 inches deep, takes more and more time and materials as the garden reaches its seventh season.

(see *Garden* p. 32)

*(from Garden p. 31)*

Lumber has doubled in price in the Covid era. In place of the more durable but now more expensive cedar chips, fir chips are being spread in the pathways. Collins hauls away the giant and amazingly tough brown paper yard debris bags, provided free to gardeners, that all discarded plant material must be placed in.

The South Waterfront community gardeners may not bring kitchen discards such as fruit and vegetable peels, fats, meat, baked goods or any other material that wild creatures would find attractive. Let's not mention rats, but indeed they live among us as do more attractive and furry wild friends of which we might say "Awwww," instead of "Yuck."

Soil amendments are welcome, and every spring a load of topsoil is provided for gardeners to take via wheelbarrow to their bed. It's uphill to some, but it is worthwhile for the abundance in each bed come summer.

Each garden has its personality: lettuces, herbs, onions and garlic, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, and so many flowers beginning with tulips and daffodils in spring. Perennials and annuals, including six foot sunflowers, bloom and bloom. Just walking among the beds and taking in (but not *taking*) the luxuriant growth relax and refresh an observer.

Even in fall the garden flourishes, though one Mirabella gardener swears she will never grow pumpkins again because of what is not to be mentioned, above.

She finds peace and tranquility in the space and in being out in the open air. Others mention sharing ideas, plants, bulbs, seeds and chores such as watering. Anonymous tomatoes may surprise newcomers to Mirabella who find these gifts on their apartment ledges; by late summer the garden has an embarrassment of them.

A relationship with a coffee house brought in burlap bags to lay down for moisture retention and to block the sun for shade-loving plants and seedlings. Left alone, the

upper garden gets maximum sun, perfect for most flowers and vegetables.

For humans, shade can be found in the vine-covered gazebo, which has teak chairs and a couple of ceramic side tables to put their coffee on. Until an 18-wheeler or motorcycle blasts down Macadam, it's a nice break from high-rise living. Beside the gazebo, in the full sun, is a picnic table.

Don't worry if in downsizing to move to Mirabella the garden tools went to the kids or a yard sale. Personal as well as shareable tools and the debris bags are safely locked in the shed on the lower level. The one entry to the garden is opened by combination lock.



Photo by Richard Mounts

One Mirabella gardener propagates seedlings under grow-lights in her apartment. She has space in yet another community garden and with family. She has turned the top of the old concrete foundation into a bonus space where planter boxes provide even more flowers.

To her, the South

Waterfront community garden is an asset to urban life.

A third-year participant has been growing milkweed in hopes of attracting Monarch butterflies, as she did when she lived in California. This season she has added a bee house. She loves harvesting her own vegetables and sharing them.

Several long-time participants who have hung up their garden shoes have turned their balconies into container gardens. The internet and magazines have all the inspiration and guidance anyone could want. Potted plants bring greenery and blooms right up to Mirabella balcony windows and doors. They must have saucers to keep water from dripping onto the balcony below, and pots that hang are not allowed. Given the wind in our neighborhood, hanging plants would easily come to grief.

Summer harvest from the community, container or Mirabella kitchen garden guarantees the produce and flowers the northwest is famous for are right here at home.

There are lots of dirt-smelling folks happily scrubbing their fingernails at Mirabella. ■



# Portland's Ship in the Sky

by *Pete Swan*

**F**OURTEEN YEARS AGO, THE PORTLAND AERIAL TRAM – CONTROVERSIAL, expensive, practical and fun – gave life to the South Waterfront. Most of us see the tram every day, but few know the story behind this futuristic piece of transportation hardware.

For the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and three other hospitals on top of Marquam Hill, buildable space was limited, the campus hard to reach by car or bus.

OHSU, the largest employer in Portland, needed improved access for staff and patients; further development, which meant a better link to what is now called the

passing overhead would invade the privacy of backyard sunbathers and those whose bathrooms had skylights. Their contentions did not carry the day, although the city did move some of their utility lines underground and added extra street lighting as mollifying concessions.

Non-profit Portland Aerial Transportation Inc. (PATI), formed in early 2002, was responsible for moving the plan forward. Winner of its design competition, selected in March 2003, was Angelil, Graham, Pfenniger, Scholl, a Zurich company.

AGPS designers sought to avoid steel girder towers – think long-distance power lines – and called for a dramatic, streamlined, solid-appearing tower. Eschewing the boxy look of ski-area gondolas, the passenger cabins



Photo by Robert French.

South Waterfront, would provide that.

After considering an additional bus route through southwest Portland and a funicular, administrators and city officials settled on an aerial tram.

The tram solution ran into objections from residents of the Corbett neighborhood who claimed the tram

were to be sleek, shiny and smoothly curved.

Doppelmayr, the largest producer of ski lifts in Europe, was chosen to engineer, fabricate, install and operate the tram. The cabins were constructed by Gangloff Cabins out of Switzerland.

*(see Ship on p. 34)*

*(from Ship p. 33)*

On-site construction began in August of 2005, and the project was completed in October 2006. OHSU staff took the first non-technician rides on Dec. 15, 2006.

The cost of the tram became a front-page story. The November 2002 projection did not include the cost of project management (PM) or architecture (Arch.) and totaled \$15.5 million.

Seventeen months later, the budget – this time including PM and Arch. – had jumped to \$28.5 million. One year after that, it had climbed to \$40 million and, later that same year, to \$45.0 million. The dramatic increase was attributed to the rising cost of steel and engineering modifications (see relocation of upper terminal, below).

The various stakeholders were frustrated and, at one point, the city threatened to withdraw from the project. Some questioned when OHSU knew that the upper terminal had to be relocated and whether its disclosure of that pertinent detail to the city had been timely.

Intense negotiations ensued and, in April of 2006, settlement was reached. Costs were capped at \$57 million with OHSU responsible for \$40 million, the city – through its Development Commission – paying \$8.5 million using tax-increment financing, and the balance from South Waterfront property developers.

Obviously, capital costs were not the only expenses. The annual operating budget, originally set at \$920,000, was soon raised to \$2.8 million. OHSU's contribution (its employees and patients would ride for free) is approximately 84% with the remaining 16% coming from daily fares and Tri-Met-pass accounts. That ratio, based

on ridership count, and was virtually unchanged until Covid-19 precluded public ridership.

Once the tram was up and running, Portland became responsible for maintaining the tower and both terminals. OHSU oversees operations, while Doppelmayr does tram maintenance and overhaul, day-to-day operation and provides the tram operators and technicians. Ownership of the tram rests with the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

For your next Trivia game, here are some specifics about our tram. It is estimated that riding the tram saves two million vehicle-miles and 93,000 gallons of gas each year. The linear distance between terminals is 3,300 feet with a vertical rise of 500 feet. The tower stands 197 feet in the air. The weight of the cabling plus the two cabins is approximately one million pounds. An empty cabin, plus its attachment arm and rollers, weighs 11 tons.

The two cables supporting each cabin are two inches in diameter. This cable has eight strands woven together, each strand made up of many steel filaments. The "haul rope" (really a steel cable wrapped around a synthetic core) pulls each of the cabins to the upper terminal. The horizontally oriented "bull wheels" drive a single, looped haul rope.

With the spoked, yellow guide-wheels turning on vertical axes almost 30 horizontal feet apart, how does the haul rope turn those corners (four in all)? It passes through metal guides and simply twists a little; and, yes, that does put wear on the cable.

The upper guide wheels are counterweighted at 36 tons to keep a constant tension on the haul ropes regardless of how many passengers are aboard. That tension keeps the haul rope firmly seated on the bull-wheel grooves thus



Tram general manager Ray Gardner shows visitors one of the motors that drive the bull wheel. Photo by Robert French.



transferring its torque to the motion of the cable and the attached cabins.

Does the downward-moving cabin “pull” the upward-moving cabin? Yes, to a small extent. Its descent also generates electricity that is “sold” back to the Oregon grid.

The cabins move at a speed of 22 mph, and the doors-closed-to-doors-open ride time is four minutes. Each cabin can carry up to 78 passengers plus one attendant. The tram can be safely operated in winds up to 60 mph.

The cabin attendants open/close the doors, switch on the lights, manage the passengers and are trained to evacuate passengers if necessary. They are in constant contact with the lower terminal through cell phones, walkie-talkies, and a phone line that uses the cables themselves to transmit the current.

The bull wheels are driven by a 600-horsepower variable frequency electric motor. There are three electric “drive modules” operating at any given time to convert alternating current to direct current as loads vary. These compact little guys cost \$190,000 for a set of four.

There are also two auxiliary diesel-powered motors: one to generate electric power in case of an outage, and one to support slow cabin movement for evacuation when needed.

All this machinery is out of sight beneath the lower terminal. Your reporter, during his career as an admiralty attorney, has been in quite a few ships’ engine rooms. The tram’s motor room is almost as complicated but, because there is no steam, it is not steaming hot.

Speed control is fully automated. The computer determines when the cabins are close to the terminals and then slows the speed for docking.

The cabins have been named Jean, after Jean Richardson, OHSU’s first female engineering graduate; and Walt, after Walter Reynolds, OHSU’s first African-American graduate. Look for the name plaques inside the cabins above the exit door. The automated announcements use a female voice in the Jean car and a male voice in the Walt car.

The upper terminal was named Chameffu, a Tualatin tribe name meaning “on the mountain,” with the lower terminal named Chamanchal, meaning “on the river.”

Each cabin has two banks of 24 volt rechargeable batteries to power in-cabin equipment; they automatically receive a fast charge every time the cabin docks at one of the terminals.

Three engineering issues have arisen. The first was the relocation of the upper terminal. It was learned – after design work was well underway – that if the terminal were an integral part of the OHSU hospital building, vibration from the tram would compromise micro-surgeries and sensitive lab procedures. Thus the terminal had to be redesigned

as a stand-alone structure with a sky bridge over Jackson Park Road connecting it to the hospital.

Then there was the infamous December 2018 incident of the falling panel. Remember, the cabin was deliberately designed to hide what is essentially a rectangular prism by enclosing it in an egg-shaped envelope. Since this envelope is cosmetic rather than structural, the exterior panels are made of thin, shaped metal. At the time of the incident, a 38-mph side-wind was blowing.

Many of us have a sense of how airplane wings give lift to a moving plane. Bernoulli’s Law states that when a fluid (wind-blown air in this case) moves over a convexly curved surface, pressure is reduced relative to the air flowing past the lower (concavely curved) surface. The difference in pressure results in an upward force, or lift.

Now envision one of the top curved panels. The greater pressure from beneath causes the panel to rise. Post-accident analysis by Ridgeline Engineering out of Golden, Colorado stated that when the panel, being a curved structure, flexed in this fashion, its north and south lateral edges were drawn inward. The panels were held in place by light-weight carabiners and cables, anchors that could not take the strain and failed.

With the panel unshackled, the wind did the rest.

By great good fortune, the young woman below who was hit by the panel – after it had fallen 130 feet – suffered only minor injuries, and did not require a trip to

*(see Ship on p. 36)*



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(from Ship p. 35)

the Emergency Room. The panel fix was to simply install stronger carabiners and cables.

A third engineering issue – one common to trams everywhere – is that worn load cables need replacing about every three years. A crew of 12 specially trained Doppelmayer workers takes about seven days; the tram is stationary, but the cables are still in the air. The crew stands on brackets attached to the load cables, called splicing bridges. This is delicate and dangerous work; the cost of such a repair is usually \$300,000.

The haul ropes present a different problem: they stretch enough to need “shortening” every 18 months.

The Portland Aerial Tram has now been running successfully for over 14 years. By June of 2019 it was carrying over 11,500 riders per day (counting up-and-back as two rides). Cumulative ridership at that point was almost 21 million. The tram, a city icon, appears in every tour book and is one of a very few commuter trams in the United States.

Once Covid-19 is past, pick a nice day to ride our tram, and see our city from a bird’s point of view. ■

## The Mill Whistle

by Arletha Ryan

**T**HE MILL IS OFTEN THE CORNERSTONE OF OREGON LUMBER towns. It blows at the beginning of a shift, again at noon and at quitting time. It is reasonably accurate; people set their clocks by it.

The small town of Dallas in Polk County has such a whistle.



The farm I grew up on was about five miles from the mill. In the spring of 1945, two of my sisters and I were working in our farm’s berry field, preparing for the coming harvest. None of us wore a watch. We would break for lunch when we heard the mill whistle.

One day in mid-morning the whistle blew and blew without stopping for a very long time.

This was strange indeed.

A short while later my Dad came with a big smile and announced that the war in Europe had ended. Whoever was in charge of the mill whistle just opened it up and let it blow.

The day was May 8, 1945, later established as V-E day. ■

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# That Gut Feeling is Real

by Rita Brickman Effros

**W**E ARE NOT ALONE IN OUR BODIES. TRILLIONS OF microorganisms—bacteria, viruses, fungi—live inside each of us. Collectively, these are known as the microbiome.

Our various organs each have distinct microbial inhabitants, but the bacterial community that has attracted the most attention by researchers is the one in our gut. Our digestive systems harbor more bacterial cells than there are human cells in our bodies. In fact, there are more than 100 times bacterial genes in the gut than in our entire body.

The gut is exposed to food, antigens (molecules that can trigger an immune response), harmless resident (commensal) microbes, and harmful (pathogenic) microbes. Thus, gut cells have the difficult task of discerning friend from foe.

Our microbiome begins to develop at birth. The early microbiome contains maternal vaginal, skin, oral and fecal bacterial strains. By four months of age, the infant microbiome resembles that of the maternal gut.

The microbiome composition during infancy and childhood can have a significant effect on multiple aspects of health. The standard western diet during childhood can favor subsequent obesity and certain cardiac and metabolic diseases. Gut bacteria may even play a role in early bone development.

A child's microbiome can be influenced by environmental exposures early in life. Studies have suggested that new parents should not be afraid of a little dirt or fur. Indeed, it turns out that a dog might be a baby's best friend when it comes to avoiding respiratory disorders.

Studies have shown that dogs (and to a lesser extent, cats) increase the diversity of bacteria in the houses where babies are raised. Also, growing up in a rural environment or on a farm seems to enrich the gut microbiome.

Throughout our life, the composition of the microbiome changes. In fact, recent studies suggest that the more the gut microbiome changes over the life course, the better. Beginning at about age 40, individuals start to diverge, so that their microbiomes become more and more distinctive.

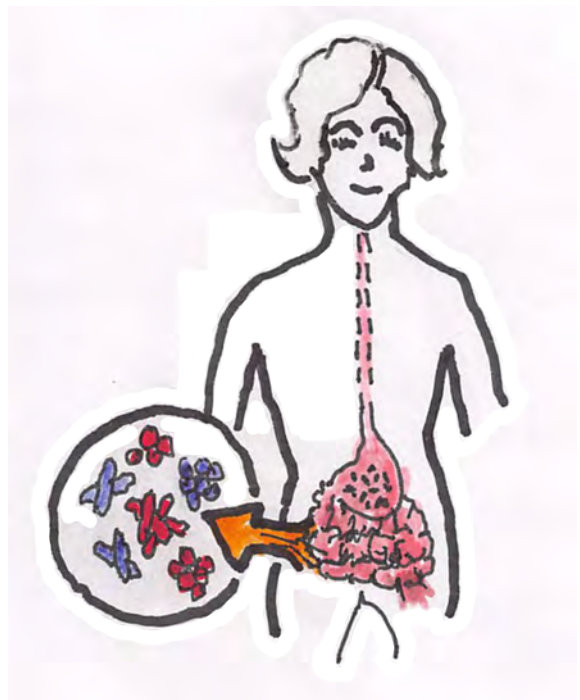
The term "gut feeling" is not an exaggeration. The sensations emanating from your belly suggest that your brain and gut are connected. The two organs are connected both physically and biochemically, and recent studies show a reciprocal relationship between brain health and gut health.

The extensive effect of the microbiome on our bodies is suggested by studies in laboratory mice that are raised

in a totally germ-free environment. Even their food is sterilized.

Abnormalities in these mice have been observed in the brain hippocampus, the myelination of certain neurons, the blood-brain barrier, fear responses and certain social behaviors. Some parallels are seen in human studies. It has been shown that extensive use of antibiotics (which kill bacteria) is associated with increased risk of depression and anxiety.

Neurotransmitters are chemicals produced in the brain that control certain emotions. For example, the neurotransmitter serotonin contributes to feelings of happiness and



Art by Frank Parker

also affects our body clock.

It turns out that neurotransmitters are also produced by the trillions of microbes living in the gut. In fact, a large proportion of the serotonin in our body is actually produced in the gut. Another important neurotransmitter, GABA, helps control feelings of fear and anxiety.

A study in rats showed that it was possible to essentially transplant a mood disorder. The researchers eliminated the native microbiome with antibiotics and gave the rats gut bacteria from patients with depression. The rat behavior was significantly altered.

The gut-brain axis also has an impact on the immune system. An important product of certain harmful bacteria is

(see *Gut* on p. 38)

*(from Gut p. 37)*

an inflammatory toxin that can cause problems if it passes from the gut into the blood.

Another facet of the gut effect on immunity relates to autoimmune diseases. One theory of autoimmunity is known as “molecular mimicry”. Basically, the immune system confuses a bacterial product with a normal part of our body.

It is thought that we start by reacting against bacteria and end up reacting against our own proteins. For example, it has been shown that one particular gut bacteria closely resemble a protein present in normal joints, suggesting a mechanism for the development of rheumatoid arthritis.

Over the past decade, it has become clear that gut microbes can produce toxins that have the capacity to damage DNA. These products can also induce cancer-promoting inflammation, make tumors resistant to chemotherapy and even suppress the body’s anti-cancer immune response.

Much of the research on human aging seems to be obsessed with “turning back the clock”. What has recently emerged, however, is that the microbiome of a healthy 20-year-old is not optimal for the health of an 80-year-old.

Research on people of all ages has provided novel insights into gut patterns over the lifespan. The microbiome changes rapidly during the first three years of life, then remains stable for several decades. Starting in mid-life, alterations in the composition occur. These changes accelerate into old age in those who are healthy, but not in people who are less healthy.

Studies on nearly 1,000 seniors have shown that those who had the most changes in their microbial compositions tended to be healthier and to have longer life spans. These “unique” individuals had several bacterial products in their blood that are known to reduce inflammation.

By contrast, people who develop early signs of frailty have less diversity in the bacterial composition of their gut.

The western diet is high in animal proteins and fat, high in refined carbohydrates and low in plant-derived fiber and in fermented foods. This diet has been associated with the relatively recent rapid rise in inflammatory-related diseases.

Given the strong link between microbiome composition and healthy aging, there are several lifestyle interventions that have been recommended. Staying physically active and eating more fiber and fish and fewer highly processed foods are choices we can each make to improve our health.

Folks who have “healthier” microbiomes have also been shown to maintain the mucosal barrier that lines the

gut. If this barrier is compromised, gut bacteria can leave the gut and enter the bloodstream. One way to prevent bacteria from destroying the lining of the gut is to provide them something else to snack on. High-fiber foods such as beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables can do just that.

The take-home message is that when you are feeding yourself, think about feeding your microbiome as well! ■



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# “The Great Pretender” Brings It All Back

by Rosemary Hole

DON'T HEAR “THE GREAT PRETENDER,” A POP TUNE FROM 65 years ago, often anymore, only when we have an oldie station on in the car.

A big hit when I was in junior high and a classic by the time I graduated from high school, the song was performed by a group called The Platters, out of Motown, short for Motor City, aka, Detroit.

The Platters had other hits, including “Only You” and “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” but only “The Great Pretender” has the power to instantly transport me to the outdoor ice-skating rink at Island Park in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

At warp speed and with eyes closed, I move back through time. I don't need to see because I know exactly where I am. It's nighttime and my lungs respond to the cold that I knew as a child growing up in a northern state. Flood lights aim down from the poles surrounding the ball field onto the large round patch of manmade ice that covers the diamond, leaving the rest of the old dark-green wooden stadium in darkness.

Every winter a city crew first flooded the area, putting down layer after layer of water to create a space of smooth clear ice. They plowed the snow into a tall rim that enclosed the rink, leaving a small opening for ingress and egress and providing a path to the “Hot House” door at one end of the stadium.

Wooden planks outside and inside the “Hot House” protected the skate blades while the small, crude interior offered benches for putting on and taking off skates. There was always someone behind the counter who sold snacks, coffee and hot chocolate, handled the record player, kept peace among the skaters...

I'm not cold. With long underwear next to my skin and a sweater over the long underwear and under my thick wool jacket, I'm what you would call bundled up. Jeans, hand-knitted hat, scarf and mittens complete the look.

As on many school nights, around 8 p.m. there aren't many skaters left on the ice. A couple of school friends, maybe. Oh yes, I see Dan's best friend is here. Ronnie Sharp loves to sweep by the girls on his hockey skates,

coming within a nano inch of knocking us over and stealing hats and scarves as he goes.

The music booms from the speakers as I fold in with the other skaters moving counter-clockwise around the rink, picking up speed and losing myself in the magic of the moment.

Finally “The Great Pretender” begins. It's a perfect match for gliding and doing simple maneuvers on the ice. I'm no Sonja Henie, but I feel the grace of my long strides, the sense of joy that she must have felt, swooping, turning and jumping as she wowed the crowds. When the song ends, I only want to hear it again.

“The Great Pretender” remains very dear to me as do the white figure skates with red-dyed rabbit pom poms on the toes, each with a small silver bell.

A Christmas present before my 14th birthday, and the only pair of ice skates I've ever owned, I carried them with me here and there across the country, skating with my children in Vermont and on an indoor rink in La Jolla, California, of all places.



Art by Hebe Greizerstein

When we were packing up to move from Southern California to Portland, I rediscovered my skates in a box stored above the garage. The blades were dark and dull. There were cracks in the leather and when I lifted them from the box, the soles pulled away from the upper part, exposing several layers of paper-like cardboard.

The only thing that looked the same: the two red pom poms, bells still intact. ■



