

# 3550



September 2020

a publication by and for the residents of Mirabella Portland



Steve Casey  
Editor



Ed Parker  
President

A MENTOR IN A FORMER LIFE OBSERVED, "THERE IS A difference between having seven years' experience and having one year's experience seven times."

I have been running 3550 Magazine more than seven years, now. Eight, if you count the months of prep prior to publishing our first issue in June 2013. In the flush of fresh adventure, visualizing, starting and growing the magazine was exciting, and possible only because of an astonishing array of talented, enthusiastic folks who joined our staff.

It has been an honor to have led such a great bunch, as we won journalism awards and earned the trust and appreciation of our readership.

But change is good, keeping both people and organizations fresh, and I believe we are at that point with 3550.

Effective January 1, deputy editors Nancy Moss and Ed Parker will become co-editors of 3550. Sharing editorship was their choice.

Nancy, a teacher at Iolani School in Honolulu for 28 years, is also a fine playwright, repeatedly honored in Portland and Hawaii for her work. Ed freelanced for the Vancouver Sun during college, then became a staff writer there before earning graduate degrees and becoming a Stanford professor and Silicon Valley entrepreneur.

Nancy and Ed each make important – nay, vital – contributions to the magazine, and the skills of one nicely complement the skills of the other. They will be a fine team.

I am not going away. I'll be called "contributing editor," and they will be my bosses.

I cannot thank enough the wonderful and talented folks who have been our staff and contributors over the years. Photographers, writers, editors, designers, ad reps and money managers have all made the 3550 team the best an editor could hope for.

And a word about Mirabella and PRS management. Our independent, sometimes cranky magazine has held them accountable with rarely a word of complaint. That demonstrates maturity – not always easy to find in corporate life. ■

I AM PLEASED THAT THE MIRABELLA PORTLAND FOUNDATION IS BUYING a SARS-CoV-2 virus testing machine for Mirabella.

Recent evidence confirms that the Covid-19 disease is spreading rapidly because many people without symptoms have been infected and are infecting others. Testing everyone at Mirabella will allow our community's pandemic response planning to be based on facts, not assumptions.

The Centers for Disease Control reported on July 10 that an estimated 40 percent of the people transmitting the disease to others are without symptoms. They further estimated that 50 percent of the transmission to others by people with symptoms occurred before the symptoms appeared.

Good public health policies require good data. That is true in Mirabella and in the rest of the country.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, confirmed in late June that the U.S. response to the pandemic is not working. He said that general population testing will be needed to learn enough about the transmission process to get it under control.

He proposed a technique of group testing that would gather the necessary evidence in a way the nation can afford. The Food and Drug Administration approved his technique in mid-July.

Why is population testing not happening?

Federal government purchasing power and negotiating leverage could make Dr. Fauci's plan happen. Instead it is being left to state governments that are required to balance their budgets. For Oregon to get enough testing capability would take money away from schools or other government programs at a time when the pandemic is already cutting state tax revenues and forcing budget cuts.

It is good news that population testing will provide the data needed to keep Mirabella residents safe. However, it is a sad commentary on the state of U.S. policy that only those of us who are wealthy might be able to afford testing and the people who need it most are left without.

That outrages me. ■



**O**N THE COVER:  
The masked Dan and Rosemary Hole, Priscilla and Nick Cowell, Charyl Cathey and Joe Cenicerros observe physical distancing while enjoying a summertime game of bocce at Caruthers Park. Photo shoot produced by Nancy Moss. Photography by Robert French.



**B**ACK COVER:  
Mirabella tower under construction. Note the absence of OHSU's new building, CHH2, and concrete being poured for 21st floor.

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### 3550 MAGAZINE

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# Sharp Pencils Give Most a Low Fee Hike; Higher Care Levels Are Not So Lucky

by Steve Casey

THE LOW 3.5 PERCENT FEE INCREASE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING residents for the 2020-2021 fiscal year is the result of intense number crunching by executive director Sharon McCartney and parent company Pacific Retirement Services' accounting team, and comes with a caveat.

"It won't be 3.5 in coming years, but it was something we could do this year," Sharon told 3550.

Next year's budget, reviewed by the resident financial advisory committee and approved by Mirabella's board of directors, envisions operating revenues of \$24.17 million, and operating expense of \$23.92 million. It also provides for continued whitening away at \$88 million of remaining debt from construction of the building.

The budget and its fees become effective with the start of the next fiscal year in October.

As budget work started, Sharon said, "I'm looking at ways to be efficient. The biggest thing I look at is wages, because that's about 48 percent of our expenses. With minimum wage and the compression factor, that's been a challenge."

Oregon's 2016 legislature (Senate Bill 1532 for those keeping track) established a series of annual minimum wage increases beginning that July and running through July 1, 2022, with further increases based on the consumer price index in following years.

The minimum wage in the Portland Metro area became \$14 this July and increases to \$14.75 next year.

The "compression factor" means raises going to employees who make more than minimum wage, to keep some fiscal distance between all position levels.

Another significant budget consideration was anticipated revenues, a product of the projected "census" – how many residents live here in independent living, assisted living, or the nursing or memory care centers.

That is somewhat tricky to predict, given the uncertainties about the effect Covid-19 may have on move-ins.

For budget purposes, Sharon said she reduced the anticipated occupancy rate from 98 percent to 96 percent, which is a difference of some five or six fewer units occupied by fee-paying residents.

As the process started, it appeared the independent living fee hike would have to be 5 percent or more, given revenue uncertainty. At the same time, management wanted to avoid a wage freeze or layoffs.

"It was not exactly an epiphany," Sharon said, "but I thought why are we bumping up wages in October" when it's not required to do so until July? So she delayed the early wage increase, resulting in a saving for the coming fiscal year of "hundreds of thousands of dollars."

After having the accountants pore over her figures to determine what increase was necessary, she heard back: 3.9 percent.

"I was happy with that," she said. "Three point nine? Hallelujah!"

But, recognizing that services have been diminished during lockdown and residents, too, had sacrificed, "my mindset was what more can I do? Where else can we delay expenses?"

She consulted with department directors, determining what projects and improvements were essential and what could be put off a year, and what low-cost projects scheduled for next year could be done now to keep them out of next year's budget.



Photo by Giorgio Trovato on Unsplash.com

Eliminating projects that did not absolutely have to be done in the 2020-2021 fiscal year saved some more money, and the accountants said the budget could be met with a 3.5 percent increase.

"At that point, I said 'we're done!' No more hands on this budget," she reports.

While residents may rejoice that the increase is low (3 percent to 5 percent increases year-to-year are to be expected), deferring expenses raises the question: Are we just kicking the can down the road and ultimately must pay for it with a more substantial increase the next year?

Maybe.

If the occupancy rate hits its usual 98 percent and most of those five or six extra vacant apartments are, in fact, sold, fees from those residents can be used to complete projects in the coming fiscal year, not burdening subsequent years. But it is unlikely residents will enjoy an annual increase as low as 3.5 percent again in the foreseeable future.

The bad news is found on the second floor and in assisted living, where residents face far steeper hikes.

For health care residents, "It's vastly different than for independent living," Sharon said.

Mirabella residents in assisted living face a 5.5 percent increase in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, on top of the 6 percent hike that kicked in last October.

Any non-Mirabella residents in assisted living (although there are none now) would face an 8 percent increase, in addition to the current year's 7 percent raise.

Fees for Mirabella residents in memory care or skilled nursing went up 7 percent this year and will go up another 8 percent in October. Non-Mirabella residents there will find a 9 percent hike on top of the 9 percent already imposed this year.

The present Health Center fee charged to Mirabella residents is not covering expenses, Sharon said, and even with the increase is a deep discount from market rate.

As Sharon has told the finance advisory committee and a resident forum, the Health Center must remain competitive with wages for nurses and certified nursing assistants if it is to attract and retain professional staff, so their wages continue to increase to meet market levels. This results in a loss to the bottom line, which drives fee increases.

The recent addition of \$300,000 to the second floor wage ledger was coupled with the hope that a larger and long-term staff would allow admittance of additional top-paying outside patients which would boost the bottom line. Thanks to Covid-19, that remains conjecture.

In addition to monthly fees, the entrance fees paid by new residents are to increase 3 percent, according to the approved budget. ■

## More Honors for 3550 Magazine

FOR THE SECOND YEAR RUNNING, YOUR 3550 MAGAZINE TOOK home four national honors in the annual Apex Awards for publication excellence.

The 2020 Apex Awards judging panel evaluated writing, photography, layout, editorial judgment and overall quality in a competition that this year drew some 1,200 entries from publications large and small for work produced during 2019.

3550 Magazine took two best-of-show honors called "Grand Awards" and two "Awards of Excellence."

The Grand Awards went to editor Steve Casey and writer Bruce Howard in the writing category for their story on predatory drug pricing in their cover story in the June 2019 issue, and to writer Priscilla Cowell for her loving "Portrait of a Second Grade Pen Pal" in the same issue.

Photographer Robert French won an Award of Excellence for his compelling photo essay, Images of Myanmar, in the March issue.

The entire staff was honored with an Award of Excellence for the September 2019 issue, which included writer Claire Weber's story on non-binary employees, the ongoing controversy over Live Nation's plan to plunk a 10,000 seat amphitheater on Zidell property, a Todd Albert photo essay, continuing coverage of Mirabella's dining program in a state of flux, urgent care coming to the South Waterfront, the honoring of 90-year-old veterans and more.

Winners were announced on July 4.

The awards are the product of Communications Concepts, Inc., which helps publishing, public relations and marketing professionals hone their skills. ■



Priscilla Cowell and her pen pal, Emily. Photo by Ellen Ferrin.



# Foundation Funds Study of Resident-Staff Interactions

by Steve Casey and Nancy Moss

THE MIRABELLA PORTLAND FOUNDATION IS PAYING \$16,500 to a consultant for a “cultural assessment” of the community, dealing with resident-to-staff, staff-to-resident and staff-to-staff interactions.

While the expense was approved by the foundation’s board of directors at its meeting in late July, the scope of the project and its methodology are a work in progress.

The funding request was taken to the board by Sharon McCartney, Mirabella’s executive director.

Most issues prompting her concern center on sexual harassment or inappropriate racial or ethnic comments or simple lack of respect, Sharon told 3550.

“This goes back many years,” Sharon said. “Staff have been coming to me about residents treating them in a concerning manner.”

Sensing that the one-two punch of Covid-19 and nightly violent protests against racial injustice have people feeling cooped up and increasingly tense, Sharon sent a letter to all employees.

The undated letter says, “I want to be abundantly clear that Mirabella opposes racism and discrimination in all forms,” and “it’s my job to ensure every member of this community feels welcome and supported here.”

While employees have lives different from one another, “in here we’re family and we treat each other as such,” Sharon said. “When you come to work, it should be free from racism, sexual harassment, sexism.”

To say nothing of plain old hostility and entitlement.

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*Effort fueled by staff complaints of disrespect from residents and other employees.*

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Sharon selected consultant Dianne Dawson Daniels, the principal of 4D Advising in Flossmoor, Ill. Daniels holds a doctorate in business administration from Nova Southeastern University and is an associate professor at Loyola University Chicago. She was recommended by a professional group to which Mirabella belongs.

Sharon told 3550 the “cultural assessment” will come through a series of focus groups involving both residents and employees, will “take the temperature of our place,” and help set realistic expectations for residents and staff alike.

Details yet to be worked out include when the focus groups will start, who will participate, how the success or failure of the project will be determined.

Sharon described this as “an employee-based project.”

Which raises the question: then why is the foundation, which continually seeks resident donations, being tapped to pay for it? Is this “mission creep,” which will discourage residents from donating in the future?

Sharon said when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, a number of employees fell on hard times and residents responded generously, donating to the foundation’s employee hardship fund. That fund will pay for the consultant, Sharon said.

(Residents also provide employee scholarships through the foundation and year-end employee cash bonuses through separate donations.)

Although it is the foundation’s board of directors that has authority to make expenditures, the resident foundation committee generally screens requests and offers advice, assuring requests get a public airing.

That did not happen in this case.

At the July meeting, the foundation board also approved purchasing a Covid-19 testing machine for Mirabella. (See separate story in this news section.) ■



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# Riverfront Development Gets Planning Okay

by Pete Swan

THE LONG-DELAYED AND, AT TIMES, CONTROVERSIAL, ALAMO Manhattan proposed development of riverfront property north of the Old Spaghetti Factory has taken an enormous stride toward becoming a reality.

Alamo Manhattan first went to the Portland Design Commission on Jan. 31, 2019.

The process came to an end 18 months later, on July 2, 2020, when the commission by a 6 to 1 vote approved all aspects of the design.

The lengthy evaluation determined – after five hearings – that the modified Alamo designs satisfied Central City and South Waterfront design guidelines.

Designs for the five buildings on four square blocks plus the Greenway (that Alamo must construct) along the Willamette river include landscaping, river overlooks, a pedestrian-only “paseo”, two 250-foot-high towers atop four-story “podiums”, three other mid-rise (four to six stories) buildings, glazing on lower stories, exterior finishes and façade elements, balconies, interior parking spaces, public spaces and access to the river.

Commissioners evaluated the designs for compliance with 22 different guidelines, nine state-wide planning goals, multiple sections of the city zoning ordinance and four “approval criteria” pertaining to the Greenway.

The seven commissioners reviewed detailed architectural plans, the materials list, and landscape designs. They

also heard and considered testimony from 42 citizens. Objections based on having tall buildings on the blocks closest to the river and interfering with private views did not gain traction as the zoning and planning requirements were all satisfied.

Although one building comes as close as three feet from the Greenway setback boundary at two points, it does not touch or intrude, thus complying with the ordinance.

Changes were made to balcony railings and Greenway lighting to make those places more “bird-friendly.”

A decision of the Design Commission can be appealed to the Portland City Council, which would hold a public, evidentiary hearing.

Some condo owners in the John Ross and Atwater are presently lobbying for such an appeal.

Site development and building permits must still be obtained. Alamo Manhattan’s president, Matt Segrest, said they planned to break ground on the two northern blocks in the second quarter of 2021.

Alamo Manhattan has another project presently under construction in the block bounded on the west and east by Macadam and Moody respectively and on the north and south by Lane and Abernethy.

It’s a concrete and timber-framed seven-story building with underground parking, ground-floor commercial tenants, and 232 apartments. It is to be called The Dylan.

Wade Johns, Alamo’s chief operating officer, told 3550, “the project is moving along nicely and is scheduled to be completed in [the third quarter of] 2021.” ■



The four market-rate buildings planned by Alamo Manhattan. To the right of number four is a building of affordable housing, part of the development.

## Covid-19 Testing is Coming to All Residents of Mirabella.

**O**REGON IS TESTING RESIDENTS AND STAFF IN CARE FACILITIES – which for Mirabella means assisted living and the Health Center – but not retirement community residents in independent living.

But at the July 21 meeting of the Mirabella Portland Foundation board of directors, the board unanimously approved the purchase of a \$14,000 testing machine, with delivery expected in early to late September.

Pacific Retirement Services, Mirabella’s parent corporation, did the research and recommended which device to purchase.

Debbie Rayburn, the PRS chief healthcare officer, told 3550 the aim is to augment – not replace – testing already available in the community.

“In a pandemic, supplies cannot be guaranteed,” she said. The machine requires a special cartridge for each test, and those are in demand. She is obtaining all she can.

Debbie said with the testing done in-house, “test results are obtained on this machine within an hour.”

At press time, a number of details had yet to be worked out, such as the cost of materials and labor to conduct the testing, specific delivery time, training on the machine use, whether residents should be charged for tests or a foundation fund-raising effort could pay for tests which would then be free to residents.

Stay tuned, stay healthy, wear your mask and wash your hands. ■

## Zoom Powers Telemedicine at OHSU

**W**ITH ALL THE CLASSES, COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND TOWN halls, a lot of Mirabella residents have taken to Zoom, the popular video conferencing application that runs on computers, tablets and smart phones.

Getting familiar with Zoom recently became yet more valuable for residents who are patients at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU).

Long offering telemedicine in other incarnations, OHSU now runs its “virtual visits” with urgent care and with doctors and other providers in more than 20 clinical specialties on the Zoom platform, accessed through the patient’s MyChart login.

Virtual visits became increasingly common as the Covid-19 pandemic ramped up its assault on the nation.

For urgent but non-emergent care, patients can see a physician’s assistant or nurse practitioner for problems ranging from back pain to fever to headache to nausea and more. ■

## Mirabella Plots Growing Plants

**G**REEN ZEBRA. LUCKY TIGER. NEBRASKA WEDDING. PORK Chop. These are a few of the varieties of tomatoes Mirabella residents may feast on this summer thanks to the efforts of Bistro servers Bebba Vamvounakis and Gregory Jackson.

Working five hours a week, Bebba and Gregory have been growing more than 35 different herbs as well as tomatoes in the 48 planter beds on the seventh floor rooftop. They have spent their time reconditioning the soil and preparing the boxes before planting seeds.

These are “special tomatoes,” Bebba says, savoring names like Sweet Millions and Indigo. Residents will get to enjoy both the tomatoes and herbs giving life to summer salads. ■



Gregory Jackson and Bebba Vamvounakis at roof garden above the 6th floor terrace.  
Photo by Anthony Schroeder.

## So, Which EAF Is That?

**M**IRABELLA HAS SEVERAL SEPARATE FUNDS. Two of them had the same acronym, EAF, causing a smidge of confusion.

There was the Employee Appreciation Fund, which rewards Mirabella employees with a cash gift at the end of the year. Residents write one whopping check or make monthly contributions.

And there was the Employee Assistance Fund, which aided staff members facing emergency money problems.

In June, the Mirabella Foundation decided to end the confusion and rebrand the emergency fund, which is now known as the Employee Hardship Fund.

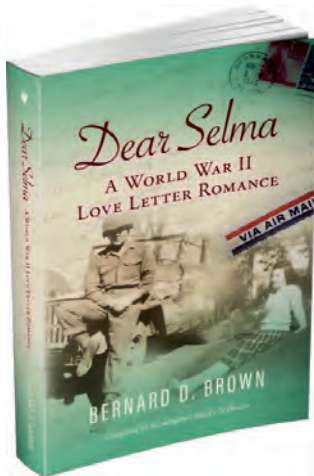
It’s perfectly okay to contribute to both. ■



## Letters to Selma

**W**HEN BERNARD BROWN WENT OFF TO THE ARMY AND then to war, he wrote his childhood friend, Selma, every day.

Friends for years, they fell in love through those letters, which shared his experiences, his war, his growth into a mature man. The couple married and were together 72 years until Selma's death in 2017.



Selma saved 246 of his letters, written between 1941 and 1945. While preparing for Bernard's move from Salem to his native Portland, and into Mirabella, daughter Shelley Brown read the letters and saw them as a treasure.

They told of being sent by the Army to study engineering, only to have that assignment shut down when the war got hotter and Bernard found himself in boot camp and shipped off to Europe. There, he fought on the front lines in France and Germany, helping to liberate the Dachau concentration camp in 1945.

The letters tell of a long-distance relationship and of Bernard's abounding optimism, convinced that despite the obvious dangers he would be coming home to Selma.

Their story is now chronicled in a new book, *Dear Selma*, which Shelly and Bernard edited.

*Dear Selma* is available on Amazon, and proceeds from book sales go as a gift to the Ronald McDonald House in the South Waterfront, where Bernard, a retired optometrist, has been a faithful volunteer. ■

## Ericksons Endow OHSU Faculty Position

**A**N OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY (OHSU) NEUROLOGIST has been awarded a professorship endowed by two Mirabella residents.

The Wayne and Sandra Ericksen Professorship for Neurodegenerative Research was given to Joseph F. Quinn, M.D.

OHSU's Brain Institute says in a release that the professorship "supports translational research and clinical care as it relates to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias."

Dr. Quinn "has received multiple research grants and has published extensively on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias such as those caused by Parkinson's Disease," OHSU said.

Wayne Ericksen resides in independent living and Sandy Ericksen now lives in Mirabella's memory care unit. ■



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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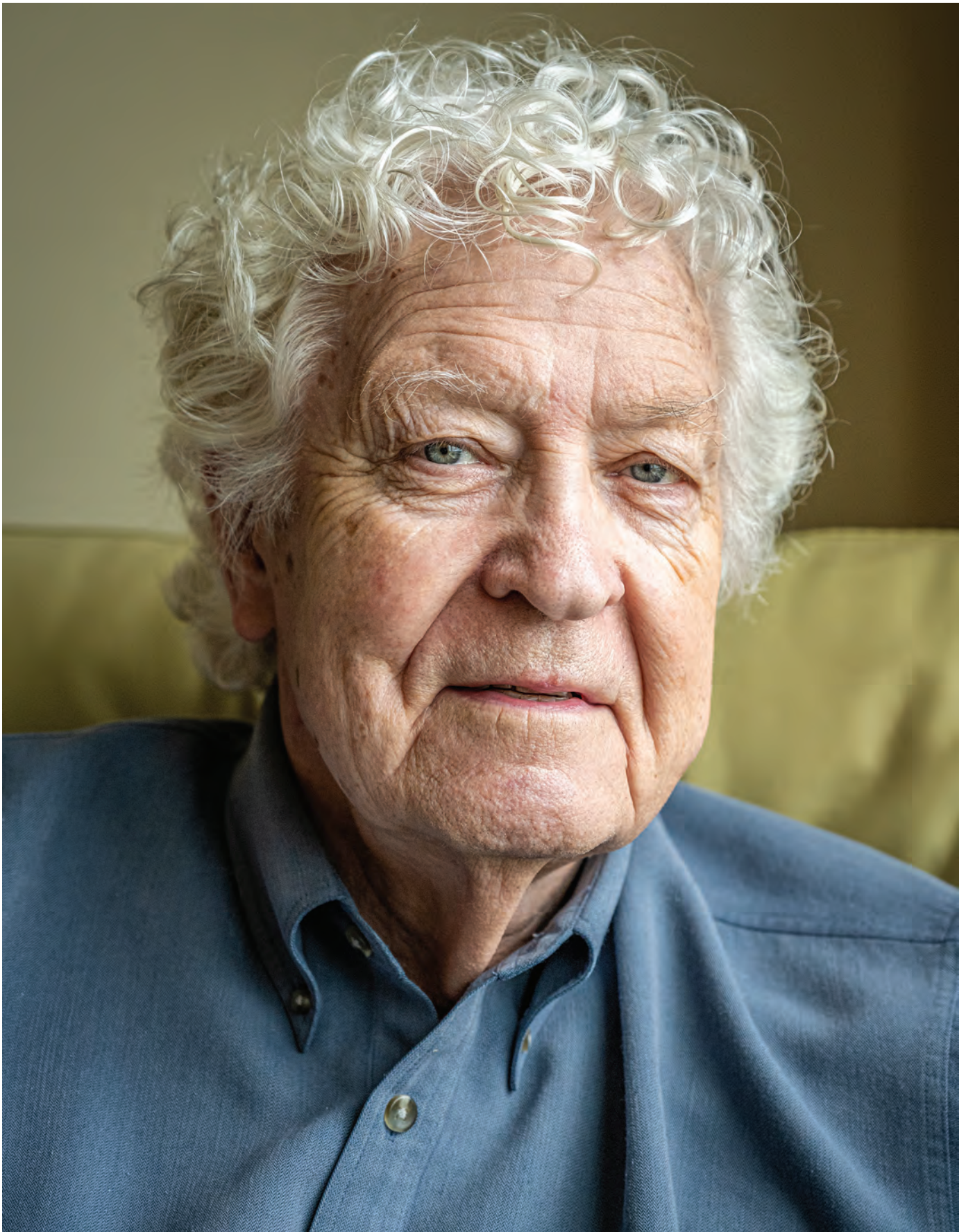


Photo by Ron Mendonca

## Ralph Merrill

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by Priscilla Cowell

**R**ALPH MERRILL'S GENTLE HUMOR AND LAID-BACK STYLE BELIE his lifetime of achievements. "I developed a competitive nature in childhood," he says.

From grade school marble champ to high school Eagle Scout, orchestra trumpeter, and unanimous choice for all-state basketball honors, he finished up a distinguished career in oral surgery with 30 years on the faculty of Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), retiring as department chair and professor emeritus.

He had trained 40 residents in oral surgery.

Along the way, he served as president of both the Oregon and western societies of oral surgeons, seven years as an examiner for the American board of oral surgeons, and had teaching affiliations with Harvard, the University of Colorado, and Franklin Army Hospital. He

## Resident Profile: Ralph Merrill

was a member of two search committees for the OHSU president.

Ralph's birth was on Christmas Eve during a record snowstorm. He and his wife, Bonnie, were delivered two years apart by the same doctor at the same hospital in Salt Lake City.

"We first met while in high school on a blind date and soon became soul mates," Ralph recalls. But his Air National Guard unit became activated for the Korean War and they were parted and lost touch.

Graduating early from East High School in Salt Lake City and discharged from the Air Force, Ralph attended the University of Utah and University of Denver on basketball scholarships and the GI Bill.

Following the lead of a friend, he was accepted at dental school at the University of Washington in Seattle. An award-winning student, he found he really enjoyed his studies. In his sophomore year, Ralph also joined the U.S. Public Health Service as a Coast Guard officer. He managed to reconnect with Bonnie, who had been excelling in ski racing and ballet, and they were married after his junior year.

An unusual honeymoon followed. Ralph was sent on a summer externship to the native hospital in Sitka, Alaska.

"Bonnie taught Eskimo high school students and I was influenced by the hospital staff to choose career specialization in oral surgery, which I wanted to teach," Ralph remembers.

After completing dental school in Seattle, Dr. Merrill, wearing his Coast Guard uniform, was sent to work with Coast Guard patients in Norfolk, Va., then moved on to an oral surgery specialty program at Tufts University and Boston City Hospital, and to do academic work and nerve injury research at Boston University's medical school, which led to a master's degree.

That was a favorite time for Bonnie and Ralph, he remembers. "We lived in a 4th floor walkup and loved walking around our Back Bay neighborhood and attending Boston Symphony Orchestra open rehearsals. Also we were able to spend a three-month gap in my training, and Bonnie's vacation from teaching, in a VW camper van traveling around Europe."

After Boston, they went to Detroit for Ralph's third year of specialty training at Henry Ford Hospital. He was asked to stay on for five years as senior staff surgeon, and their three children were born there. Like their parents, they were delivered two years apart by the same doctor at the same hospital. Ralph marvels at this coincidence.

"We were eager to return to the west, and I was recruited to Oregon by Dean Lewis Terkla to chair oral surgery and initiate dental programs in the University of Oregon Hospitals (now OHSU)," he said.

During his tenure at OHSU, Ralph expanded oral surgery training from three years to four years, then to a 6-year program which included a medical degree for the residents.

One of the highlights of Ralph's tenure at OHSU was when he became involved with the Rajneeshpuram – an Indian mystic group that committed assorted felonies attempting a takeover of Oregon's Wasco County until thwarted by then Oregon secretary of state Norma Paulus, who in her final years also was a resident of Mirabella.

Ma Anand Sheela, the group's second in command, required jaw surgery and Ralph was recommended for the job. He was flown to the ranch in their C-47, where for security reasons the surgery was to take place.

A tour of the ranch impressed him.

He watched a parade of the (cult leader) Bagwan's Rolls Royce automobiles, and the Bagwan shook Ralph's hand and broke his long silence to remark, "I, too, am a surgeon, but not as well known."

The entire assisting medical team—cardiologist, anesthesiologist, and nurses—were Rajneesh adherents who had turned their lives and their assets over to the cult leader. The surgery and recovery went well, and Sheela eventually wrote to Ralph from her California prison cell.

(see Merrill p. 12)

(from Merrill p. 11)

While less dramatic than consorting with felons, Ralph's two sabbaticals stand as highlights of his long career. One was at Mass General and Harvard during the nation's Bicentennial and the other was spent observing oral surgery programs in Europe, Japan and the U.S. That one included four months at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, where Bonnie enjoyed being part of the New York dance scene.

In retirement, Ralph has enjoyed watching his three grandchildren grow up and became skilled at making beautiful fused glass art pieces which decorate his apartment.

In February 2019 Bonnie passed away.

When she and Ralph moved to Oregon, she had switched from ballet to modern, forming dance companies, teaching dance at Portland State University, and choreographing more than 100 works.

"She had been a force in dance her entire life, and Gov. Barbara Roberts honored Bonnie by selecting her for a Governor's Arts Award in Dance," Ralph says proudly. At her memorial service at Mirabella's Willamette Hall, Bonnie's friends and colleagues created and performed a new dance to honor her life and contributions to modern dance.

"Nearing her end, Bonnie told me that she had lived a good life," says Ralph.

"We both experienced good lives with our rewarding years together at Mirabella." ■



Ralph Merrill during Coast Guard service.



Ralph and Bonnie Merrill enjoying a Hawaii vacation.

# The Internet Comes to Channel 981

by Nancy Moss

**W**E FOUND A LITTLE GIZMO," MIRABELLA MEDIA committee member Rusty Davis says of efforts to link the app Zoom to channel 981.

"We needed one more interface," he explains, describing it as a "little black box." With that gizmo, and with a computer linking Netflix, Zoom, Hulu and YouTube to television, the scope of entertainment available to residents isolated by Covid-19 has broadened dramatically.

"We kept building on each other," programs committee chair Mikki Lipsey says. Rusty and fellow residents Teresa Goodwin, Steve Lipsky and Ed Parker joined Megan Huston, Mirabella's resident services director, and telecom coordinator Michael Hardin to do the hard work and make linkage possible.

As a result, Sharon McCartney's executive director coffee socials and town halls, as well as resident association (RAMP) meetings, now appear on television, through a computer operated by executive assistant Christina Dye.

The Mirabella Players' Zoom show, and music programs formerly only a gleam in Walter Greizerstein's eye, will replace Willamette Hall performances for the foreseeable future.

As long as the virus and social distancing remain with us, however, many interest groups and Mirabella committees will use Zoom, which can be a stretch for some residents with outmoded machines and limited technical skills.

Some may need to replace outdated equipment to take advantage of the many social interactions that Mirabella offers. Both Ed and Rusty can recommend inexpensive products for members with phones or computers that cannot handle Zoom.

Ed mentions the iPhone SE, which sells for about \$400. Purchasers may get credit for turning in an old phone. Rusty suggests an Acer Chromebook sold on Amazon for \$250.

"My hope is to get people more comfortable with the technology" to "relieve the negative side effects of social isolation," says RAMP president Ed Parker.

One group learning the new technology, the Mirabella Players, is having Zoom rehearsals that will culminate in a Zoom performance.

How that would work, how an actor exits the 'stage' when there is no stage, will become clear.

Aside from Zoom, channel 981 remains another source of commonality for residents. Despite its limitations—its bleached-out color and that annoying moving

line—channel 981 provides both exercise classes and entertainment.

Rosie Hole's heroic role in providing nightly movies has given residents some rich entertainment, with follow-up online comments creating the sense of sharing that post-theater discussion did in the recent past. "I heard John Wayne and Robert Duvall didn't get along," Rosie writes, giving residents the brief thrill of insider gossip.



*"I have a good job and a great family, but I'm dissatisfied with my internet service provider."*

Moving from Comcast to Gigabit Now, which is the current plan, should give Mirabella the ability to stop and then restart a movie, if viewers need a snack or bathroom break, or to record and save it for a more convenient time. Bryant's exercise classes could be recorded as Mirabella's outside trainers' classes on Zoom currently are.

Mirabella's media system could move into the 21st century.

A winter of cold rain and early darkness lies ahead. Like squirrels hiding nuts for the winter ahead, Mirabella residents can increase their level of electronic competence, attend RAMP meetings on channel 981 or join Zoom groups and prepare for a season of heightened challenges. ■

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by Pamela Lindholm-Levy

**A**NTHONY SCHROEDER, NOW MIRABELLA'S EXECUTIVE CHEF, had a tryout with predecessor Todd Albert, before the community opened 10 years ago.

Tasked with creating a protein of his choice, he chose duck breast with a beurre rouge sauce. Not a problem.

In the kitchen at Holladay Park Plaza, however, where this audition took place, he hadn't been shown the dry storage, and all he could find to make a starch option were eggs and flour. He made spaetzle.

He got the job as chef de cuisine, Mirabella opened, and Anthony became one of only a half-dozen staff Septemberistas who are still working at Mirabella today.

His story, though, begins generations earlier, with his father a foundling and his maternal forebears walking hundreds of miles from Texas to a new life in Southern California.

Anthony's dad was dumped by the side of a road as an infant, left with a baby bottle full of Coca-Cola. A ranching family adopted him, supplying him — and through him Anthony — with a German surname. His history is a mystery.

"A lot of people I know think that I'm Italian," Anthony says.

His mother's side is less mysterious but no less dramatic.

Anthony's maternal great-grandfather left Mexico on foot to escape turbulent times. He was joined by great-grandmother soon after great-granddad had established himself in the U.S.

The couple then walked from Texas to California, a trek suggesting "The Grapes of Wrath," minus the dilapidated truck.

Anthony's maternal great-grandfather worked in L.A., building movie sets. A daughter, Anthony's grandmother, married a military man, and Anthony's mother was the eldest of their five children.

Growing up in Portland, at 16 Anthony got a job to pay for his car and insurance. Dad had said so. The job was in a retirement home, serving and washing dishes; a sign, perhaps.

He moved on to another job, dishwashing, yes, but he was interested and inspired to see the way the staff worked together to produce good food. Plus, it exposed Anthony to new and interesting foods.

"I can remember not knowing the difference between provolone and Swiss cheese and didn't know that there were other breads beyond white and wheat," he says today.

In 1996, Anthony moved to northern California and worked at a deli whose owner provided his employees with benefits and help beyond the minimum wage he was able to pay. Anthony says, "From him I learned compassion."

After other jobs in California, Anthony and his girlfriend, Amie, who is now his wife, moved back to Portland where both attended the Western Culinary Institute (WCI) for a one-year course. At the same time, he began working at now-long-gone Oritalia, an Asian-Italian fusion restaurant in the Westin Hotel. With inspiration from the chef there, he learned a lot and worked his way from the pantry station to the sauté and grill positions.

After the course at WCI was finished, Anthony worked six years as lead line cook at the River Place Hotel, but when his hours were cut back he spent eight months in the Washington County Jail. By choice. With little experience working with inmates.

"And the food was terrible," he admits.

It wasn't his fault. No creativity was possible, even after all his training. The basic ingredients were cheap, the

## Staff Profile: Anthony Schroeder Executive Chef

recipes had to be followed to give the consistency of food expected by management, not to mention to keep costs down.

Because his kitchen help were inmates, the knives and other sharp tools were tethered to metal poles with wire. He made his staff happy with the coffee they craved. He learned that the other inmates really liked cookies, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and any kind of protein, which sounds like a clue that meals were pretty starchy.

In spite of all its limitations, Anthony says he really enjoyed the job.

For a time, and in conjunction with the WCI course, Anthony worked at the now-shuttered Oba in Northwest. Here he learned aspects of kitchen management and operation that was not, and probably could not be, learned in school. All this led up to Mirabella.

Here, Anthony has moved up from chef de cuisine to executive chef and has been here longer than on any other job. He credits Todd Albert, who is now corporate culinary director for Mirabella's parent corporation, Pacific Retirement Services (and still serves, occasionally, as a 3550 staff photographer.)

(see Schroeder p. 16)

Photo by Robert French



**Anthony Schroeder**

(from Schroeder p. 14)

Todd has mentored Anthony in staff management, food quality and especially not compromising on anything.

When Anthony began at Mirabella, the kitchen wasn't finished; everything was done in the prep kitchen in the basement and residents could dine only in the Bistro.

Anthony had to learn what the residents liked (not too spicy) before bringing new recipes on board. He did bring ideas in from other places, and still plans menus, along with the chef de cuisine, Everett Broyles.

There are many other duties on his metaphorical plate. There is administrative work besides the actual food aspect: scheduling, employee reviews, ordering. He's responsible for everything in the kitchen. One of Anthony's goals is to continue to bring in new recipes and good food to residents.

Anthony is aware that a wave of vegetarians and even vegans is in the Mirabella pipeline, perhaps a few years out. He has some recipes, and some appear as choices now, but he finds they are not particularly popular and create waste. Tofu is OK, he says, depending on the preparation.

But, then, enter the coronavirus.

An immediate change to preparing meals as to-go packages delivered to residents' apartments made for quick adjustments demanded of Anthony's staff.

Everyone had to learn on the job. No one quit. Recipes had to be doubled, and more, because food choices were curtailed. Ingredients also had to be reviewed for availability. Anthony worried he would run out. Luckily, Mirabella and Holladay Park Plaza share a reliable supply manager.

Getting everyone fed, it was important to keep on the regular cycle of recipes and not be too creative.

Away from Mirabella food, Anthony still talks shop with Amie, who has been a chef at a New Seasons market and now is a prepared foods manager at one of its locations. They have worked in two different restaurants together, and share recipe ideas while cooking at home.

He says, though, that the home kitchen is hers. He likes to barbecue. He likes Mexican and Indian food when he and Amie go out, and he enjoys eating at food trucks.

Would he like to have his own restaurant? Absolutely not.

At home, beyond food, there are indoor and landscaping projects to work on, watched over by Dora, the kitten who plays fetch, at their new house.

The couple likes to go camping, and soft-spoken Anthony keeps fit running, boxing and doing martial arts. ■



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# Protesters, Police Perturb Portlanders

## Social Justice or Anarchy?



Photo by Sean Meagher/The Oregonian

Stories by Steve Casey, Deavon Snoke and Margaret Toppel

Photos by Dave Killen, Sean Meagher and Robert French

# Portland Streets Become National, Political Battleground

by Steve Casey

THE COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER AND THE FEDERAL COURTHOUSE a block away in downtown Portland are 1,734 miles from the Minneapolis intersection where then-police officer Derek Chauvin killed arrestee George Floyd.

They are also 2,808 miles from the White House.

But both Minneapolis and the White House came to the streets of Portland over the spring and summer.

Every night for more than two solid months, protesters whose ranks occasionally swelled into the thousands demonstrated around the city in opposition to police brutality, institutional racism and a laundry list of grievances rational and otherwise.

Mostly they were peaceful, at least in the early hours, but as nights wore on, and weeks wore on, some members of the crowd became violent, trashing businesses and cars, smashing windows, hurling heavy objects at police, setting fires.

In response, police wielded batons, set off flashbang grenades and deployed tear gas, which scattered the crowds but further inflamed tensions.

Then the Portland protest took on the surreal quality of Alice in Wonderland. On acid.

It all turned truly bizarre as President Trump sent in federal law enforcement officers in riot gear, ostensibly to protect the U.S. courthouse. But they ranged beyond federal property, reportedly stopping and hauling away

people on the street, firing off tear gas and “impact munitions” into the crowd.

Trump called the federal action “a fantastic job” and directed more federal officers to go forth and do likewise in Chicago.

The Portland confrontations became the fare of nightly stories on national news.

Billy Williams, the U.S. Attorney for Oregon, sought an investigation into federal officers’ reported shanghaiing of people on the street. Oregon’s attorney general, Ellen Rosenblum, unsuccessfully sued Homeland Security and the U.S. Marshals Service for the same behavior.

Williams also told reporters invited to tour the damage to the courthouse and see what had been used as weapons against officers that “no one in their right mind thinks this (assault on officers and trashing the building) is OK.”

Mayor Ted Wheeler, U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, Gov. Kate Brown and others all asked the feds to leave town.

Brown told Chad Wolff, acting homeland security secretary, that the government should remove “all federal officers from our streets.”

“His response showed me he is on a mission to provoke confrontation for political purposes,” she said.

Some things became clear as the weeks went on:

- Most of the thousands of protesters who went out night after night were sincere, and peaceful.
- Some were bent on violence, either as a tactic or just for the fun of it.
- There was extensive damage to public and private property and people were injured.

Downtown businesses boarded up and owners of small businesses were hard pressed to see how they would survive.

Portland police were accused of not doing nearly enough to stop property damage and violence, and of being too heavy handed.

Given our long production time, 3550 is not where you go for breaking news. But as our readers try to make sense of the confrontations on our streets, with this issue we offer three views of the protests and law enforcement’s response.

They are not “the” truth. They are only three glimpses of truth, but we hope they will be helpful. ■



Photo by Dave Killen/The Oregonian.

# The Police

by Steve Casey

AS PORTLAND NEARED ITS 60TH CONSECUTIVE, INCREASINGLY chaotic night of protests, one former police chief whose own career ended in the wake of riots years ago had a word for what he saw.

“Two nights is a statement; this is a revolution. That needs to be understood,” Norm Stamper told 3550. “When you are seeking to overturn if not the government then a significant portion of the government, that’s a revolution.”

Known throughout his career as a progressive thinker, Stamper rose through the ranks to become second in command of the San Diego Police Department before moving to Seattle as police chief in the 1990s and now writes books on remaking American policing.

(Full disclosure: Stamper and I have been friends for somewhere north of 45 years.)

As police chief, he presided over the 1999 “Battle in Seattle,” the anti-World Trade Organization riots that left the city in shambles and Stamper heading for retirement on an island.

He learned hard lessons there, and understands the makeup of massive protest crowds.

“There are the true believers,” he told 3550. “In the case of the WTO it was anti-globalization protesters. That’s the vast majority. What’s making today so very different is we are seeing white, middle class people of all age groups who have never in their lives protested but who have seen the murder of George Floyd and said ‘this is what Black Lives Matter means.’

“There are also the anarchists. Portland people are using the word ‘agitators.’ In point of fact they are anarchists, and they are doing what they have been taught to do, which is smash windows, trash cars and then jump right back into the crowd of peaceful protesters.

“And we had what I label ‘recreational rioters;’ kids who want to have fun,” he said.

He knows the frustration of police brass, accused on the one hand of providing only pitiful protection to business owners and employees fearing permanent loss of their livelihood and citizens afraid to visit a war zone, and accused on the other of freewheeling use of tear gas and billies.

For police, when conflict on the streets gets to the level of Seattle 1999, or Seattle or Portland 2020, Stamper says

(see Casey p. 20)

# The Protesters

by Deavon Snoke

I SAT ON THE EDGE OF MY SOFA WEEKS AGO AND WATCHED Instagram Live in horror as my close friend, Zap, was pepper-sprayed without warning at a protest he was filming.

No rioting, no tagging, no destruction. Simply unarmed civilians exercising their right to peacefully protest.

Shortly after the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) declared the gathering a riot, without any violence or destruction taking place that I could see, they began firing tear gas into the crowd. As people ran to escape and leave the area, they were chased, tackled, and arrested.

I asked Zap, who has been a regular protest participant, about his experiences with the PPB, the BLM movement, defunding the police, and what he and thousands of others hope to accomplish.

His comments have been edited for space and clarity.

**Q: As we talk this (July) evening, protests are well into their second month. What are your experiences?**

A: It’s been a mix of some very beautiful and very ugly interactions. It’s been amazing to see thousands and thousands of people come out every single day and support each other in every way imaginable: water and food, emotional support, car rides, people to walk home with to feel secure. And then seeing these same supportive and positive people randomly tear gassed, shot with rubber bullets, and hit with batons has been awful.

**Q: What do you believe causes peaceful protest to become disruptive or violent?**

A: The Portland Police Bureau. I’ve been going almost daily since Friday, May 29th, when the Justice Center burned. What I saw was that on that first Friday, it was definitely disruptive and continued that Saturday as well. I think this was fueled by what people saw going on nationally.

But what I saw that first Sunday was completely different and it’s a pattern I’ve continued to see in the 40-plus days I’ve gone now. A massive group of people gathered in Laurelhurst Park and marched downtown to the Justice Center. And it was very peaceful at the Justice Center.

I was up front, in between the cops and the protesters at 2nd and Main. I saw a water bottle thrown, and then the cops launched tear gas deep, deep into the crowd. Not by hand, but with mortar-style launchers, two blocks back,

(see Snoke p. 21)

(from Casey p. 19)

"the situation is untenable. We are damned if we do and damned if we don't."

Portland police have been damned for their use of tear gas on crowds of protesters.

Deputy Chief Chris Davis told a July press conference the bureau does not want to use it.

"I don't like the idea of having to use something like that in our community," he said. "What we try to do to mitigate the effects on people who aren't engaged in criminal activity is give as many warnings as we can."

"There's a very big difference between protests and the kind of mayhem that we see every night," Davis said. He described projectiles including rocks and water bottles thrown at police officers, said officers have suffered injuries from lasers aimed into their eyes, and said the city sustained \$23 million in damage over the first six weeks of protest.

"I agree completely with what Chris Davis has said, that when a situation gets to this point it becomes the most difficult imaginable job in law enforcement," Stamper said.

"I totally get why police resort to chemical agents. You are going after people who have done a lot of damage and hurt people. They engage in hit-and-run tactics and then shield themselves in the crowd," a tactic he calls "right out of the anarchists' playbook."

"When you have incoming like that, the tendency is to trot out the tear gas," he said. "It works. The question to be asked today is 'at what cost?'"

Gassing innocent citizens tends to make them cranky, "radicalizes" them, Stamper says, and makes them more willing to hide the bad guys.

It is a lesson he learned the hard way in Seattle when he authorized using tear gas on protesters who refused to leave a major intersection and rioting followed.

"The worst decision I made in 34 years as a cop," he says today.

If Portland police were too quick on the tear gas trigger, that was as nothing compared with the arrival of federal officers.

They used batons freely, allegedly picked up people in the protest area and drove them away without explanation,

tear-gassed mayor Ted Wheeler and a wall of "Moms" protesting downtown, beat and pepper-sprayed a 53-year-old Annapolis graduate, fired an impact munition into the head of a protester standing still on the street.

Wonder of wonders, the situation got worse.

President Trump praised the federal officers and directed them to go forth and do likewise in other cities run by Democrats.

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*"This is a revolution. That needs to be understood."*  
*Norm Stamper*

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Stamper loves cops, fully supports Black Lives Matter, and finds many protester demands sincere but naïve.

Defund the police?

"I hear 'defund' and to me that means 'eliminate,'" he said.

He agrees many tasks police perform could be handled by others – and that police have been saying that for years.

But who do you call at 3 a.m.?

If an unarmed "community safety officer" makes a traffic stop and the driver pulls a gun, what does that officer do? Ask the driver to put the gun away until a real cop arrives?

And, Stamper notes, traffic stops often yield important



Photo by Robert French.

arrests. "Timothy McVey (bomber of the Oklahoma City federal building) was a traffic stop," he said.

The decision on how police departments operate must come from the community, he said — "They have to know it is their police department" — not simply from police brass or city councils or activists or business people or police labor unions, but from all of them, together. ■

(from Snoke p. 19)

all the way back to 4th and Main, trapping (protesters) in the tear gas. We all got pushed back; I saw a woman in a wheelchair with a service animal trapped in the gas, children, parents.

And as we were getting pushed through downtown with flashbangs and tear gas, I heard windows start popping, and saw kids hitting windows with their skateboards.

This is the pattern I've seen every night. People show up to protest, chant, make their voices heard, give speeches on megaphones. They're seeking change and they're met with police violence and so then they sometimes react violently.

**Q: What has been your experience with the police?**

A: I've seen the police mainly target young women. I've seen them target journalists. I've seen them cover up their

the police and they haven't changed. The police are under-trained and over-armed and have no oversight.

Obviously, people want some kind of publicly-funded group to keep the peace and prevent crime. For example, I think detectives will always be needed to investigate crimes.

One idea that I've heard that I liked was a transition over five years. The Portland police budget is \$250 million. Defund them \$50 million every year for the next five years and fund new departments and programs. Have a department that specializes in drug abuse and mental health issues. Have a department that deals with domestic abuse. Have a department that deals with traffic enforcement but isn't able to kill the driver if they feel scared.

To me, defunding and abolishing means taking that money and using it more effectively to actually create streets that feel safe, where people are housed and are mentally stable. The cops themselves say they deal with too many different types of calls.



Photo by Robert French.

**Q: How has your community been affected?**

A: It's become stronger. We're definitely more supportive of each other now, and share more information.

**Q: Best case scenario. What is the ideal outcome of the movement?**

A: Unity.

**Editor's Note:** Deavon Snoke was a server at Mirabella for two years, leaving about 2016, and remains a friend of the editor.

This is her second contribution to 3550. ■

badge numbers.

They tell people that they need to move outside of a certain area, and when protesters leave the area, they still get hit with tear gas and flashbangs and rubber bullets.

I saw a group of 30 protesters walking on the sidewalk with their hands up, outside of the area the cops said was off limits, get a flashbang thrown right in the middle of them. I've seen undercover cops try to infiltrate the protest.

**Q: We hear a lot about defunding or abolishing the police. What does that mean to you?**

A: It means the current system is so broken that it can't be reformed. It must be replaced. They've tried reforming for decades. Even during these protests, they tried to reform

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## Report From Wall of Moms

by Margaret Toppel

PROTEST NOTEBOOK, JULY 21:

After a beer and a salad at Paddy's ("Portland's Oldest Irish Pub"), a friend and I walked to the foot of Salmon Street, where the "Wall of Moms" (and Dads) met to start our march.

We marched up Salmon just after 9 p.m., walking the few blocks to the federal building, hooking elbows and chanting.

I wore a mask all the time and was at the actual march for less than two hours. Everyone except the leaders wore masks, which was impressive. The leaders could not, as they were using megaphones and could not be understood when wearing masks.

People in the park opposite the federal courthouse cheered us as we rounded the corner. We saw lots of people but no troops.

For an hour or so, we stood in front of the federal courthouse, chanting and milling about. The number of people seemed to increase as time went on, and more people moved closer to the buildings. That evening there were no fences up.

Before we left, we noticed a number of people hanging around and we figured them for agitators. Apparently, the troops did not come out until later.

Some of the women I spoke with made clear that they came out to support Black Lives Matter and would be leaving before any riot behavior started.

I think the press is reacting to the rioting, and the focus on Black Lives Matter is getting lost. ■



Peaceful daytime at protester gathering place. Photo by Margaret Toppel.


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# Mirabella Celebrates Its First Decade



On the morning of January 3, 2011, most of the 75+ residents and most of the administrators, dining and facilities staff on duty that day posed for an historical group photo on the terrace roof garden. If you were here that day, can you find yourself in the photo?

Stories by Steve Casey and Nancy Moss, and Pamela Lindholm-Levy

# Once Almost a Casualty, Mirabella Thriving 10 Years On

by Steve Casey and Nancy Moss

IN THE WORKS SINCE 2005, WITH LAND PURCHASED, ARCHITECT AND contractor hired and plans well underway, Mirabella Portland narrowly escaped becoming just another casualty of the nation's 2008 Great Recession.

The worldwide economic meltdown, propelled by go-go mortgage lending to under-qualified buyers and the burst of a housing price bubble, saw among other dark signs the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the nation's fourth-largest investment bank.

Trapped in the collapse of the subprime mortgage market and caught up in its own accounting stunts, on Sept. 15, 2008, Lehman made what still today is the largest bankruptcy filing in U.S. history.

It had been in business 158 years.



Terrace building rises as work starts on Mirabella Terrace

The Great Recession was on, wiping out nearly \$8 trillion in value, leaving almost 25% of all homeowners with mortgages upside down on their loans, and leaving millions unable to sell their homes.

The chance of financing a \$221-million, luxury high-rise retirement community in an urban renewal area of Portland, Oregon? One where most people would sell their homes to buy in? Somewhere around nil.

But Mirabella was lucky.

"We closed financing for Mirabella a couple of weeks before the collapse of Lehman Brothers," Brian McLemore,

chief executive officer of parent company Pacific Retirement Services (PRS) told 3550.

"If that (financing) had come later, we would have been devastated."

How close did it come?

"It was the last tax-exempt financing in senior housing prior to the 2008 meltdown," according to Mary Schoegg, PRS' chief financial officer.

Instead of devastation, PRS and residents celebrate Mirabella's 10th anniversary this month.

In that decade, the community has earned wide acclaim.

And, incidentally, played a supporting role in three prime-time television shows. More about that later.

The story begins with Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), the primo land owner in the South Waterfront.

OHSU started its expansion down from Marquam Hill in 2003, when it broke ground for its first building here, the Center for Health & Healing, or CHH, in the former industrial area.

OHSU wanted a relationship with a forward-thinking retirement community. It put out a request for proposals to companies interested in building close to CHH and joining OHSU by providing patients for clinical care, research, technology and partnering in the education and training of health care professionals.

PRS was interested.

With its July 1, 2005 proposal, PRS became one of the firms competing, and ultimately won the bidding.

"Originally, we were a little skeptical about it. A high-rise was going to be tough. At that point, there hadn't been a lot of high rises built around there," Brian McLemore said.

"The city, private developers, and Oregon Health & Science University, Portland's largest employer, assembled a boggling combination of funding, zoning, ambition and salesmanship to create a new high-rise neighborhood on old industrial land on the Willamette's western bank,"



Inaugural executive director Anthony Sabatini. Photo courtesy of PRS, Inc.



author Nancy Rommelmann wrote in a 2015 history of the South Waterfront in Portland Monthly magazine.

PRS teamed with firms it had worked with for more than 16 years, including Ankrom Moisan architects and Hoffman Construction, with whom the company had successfully developed two senior housing high-rise projects in Oregon – Ankrom with Skyline Plaza at Rogue Valley Manor and the campus at Davis, Calif., and Hoffman at Skyline Plaza and the original Holladay Park Plaza.

“They had done a lot of work at OHSU, which we believed would be helpful in the process,” Brian said.

In its application, PRS noted its “established long-term relationship with OHSU.”

PRS communities serve OHSU as nursing training sites, wellness research sites, as research sites for graduate students of OHSU, and board members, staff and residents “serve the university as faculty, adjunct faculty, committee members, and participants in clinical studies and research projects,” PRS said.

The PRS team building Mirabella Portland would be led by Brian, then executive vice president.

Initially, the OHSU concept was for a community to be built on a nearby property, not at 3550 S.W. Bond.



Tower about half completed

“They originally wanted us to be in the block where the parking garage is” (at Bond and Curry, now the Rood Family Pavilion, the site of a parking structure atop which sits the Ronald McDonald House,) Brian said, but he did not want that as there was nothing surrounding it and residents would have endured construction on all four sides.

The present site affords a view of the river, and construction – of the Rood building – on only one side.

Today’s Mirabella is strikingly close to the community envisioned by the RFP and the PRS proposal.

Originally, the building was to have valet parking in front, with the staff zipping cars around the corner and into the garage, and PRS would be leasing, not purchasing, the land.

That changed, Brian said, “fairly early on. We started it as a lease, then converted it to a purchase” before closing and financing. That way, OHSU got money for other projects.

“We borrowed and paid them before they changed their mind,” Brian said.

Having worked on developing Mirabella Seattle, marketing ace Adam Payn, who has been with PRS since he was 16 and driving the cocktail cart at the Rogue Valley Manor golf course, left Medford headquarters and set up shop in Portland.

In 2007, Mirabella Portland planning sessions started, “testing the market to see if this project was going to fly,” Adam, marketing director here before becoming a PRS vice president, told 3550.

Led by senior marketing executive Paul Riepma, the team toiled on building layouts, pricing and other plans, and went to market.

“I distinctly remember the first meeting we ever had,” Adam recalled, “when two men in black leather jackets walked in. It was Don (Marshall) and Michael (Marx). They said ‘This place is going to be something special, and we want in.’”

Marketing, Adam says, developed “tremendous momentum” through 2007 and then it didn’t.

“Right before the big collapse happened, we financed the building,” Adam noted, echoing Brian. “I look back at that time and if we hadn’t had such momentum and a belief in the community, my guess is that I would have had a drastic career change.

“The good news was that we financed the building at a time when sales were good, and it was going to take two and a half years to build.”

Pre-sales reserved some 90% of apartments during that initial period, which fell off at least 10 percentage points after the economy tanked. But future residents and the company held on.

“People really believed in it and were willing to weather the storm,” Adam said.

Quite a storm. Prospective residents saw the value of the homes they were selling fall drastically and saw their investments tank as well, and were unable or unwilling to pay a pre-2008 price for a Mirabella unit.

With fewer prospective residents making deposits, “we discounted some of the apartments to get them filled up,” Brian recalls.

“In Portland, we were full in 24 months because we went to the banks and said we have to reduce prices,” Brian said, “and if you won’t let us do that, here are the keys, have a nice time.”

About that time, the community’s first executive director, Anthony Sabatini, came aboard.

(see First Decade p. 26)

(from First Decade p. 25)

"We had 80 families committed to moving in during Mirabella's first three months," he told 3550 in an interview.

"After that – nothing.

"We made sure the services and amenities were what people expected," he said. "We wanted them to brag about Mirabella to their friends."

Rumors have persisted that with financing being tight, Mirabella cheated out on quality appliances and amenities, something disputed by Brian McLemore and Adam Payn.

"The model homes had the same black appliances that we all despise," Adam said. "I've learned a thing or two, doing these projects. Moving from a \$500 fridge to an \$800 fridge is totally worth it."

As potential residents sold their homes for less than they expected, PRS offered flexible financing available at five different levels, ranging from 100% refundable entry fees downward.

"We beat the odds," Anthony says today.

Mirabella has a close relationship with OHSU by design and not simply because the university used to own the land.

"There's an affiliation agreement with OHSU," Brian told 3550. "I would say it's more about the aging-research team at OHSU. What OHSU really wanted is a 'living



"We used to have wonderful terrace barbecues. Remember those?"

laboratory.' Their goal was to create technology and programs to help seniors live longer."

While the building was getting close to opening, the department directors were hired in March 2010, all of them already employees of PRS or an affiliated community.

They shared workspace in a tiny conference room at the marketing center in the 3030 Building in the shadow of the Ross Island Bridge.

In that gaggle was Sharon McCartney, now executive director but who was Mirabella's first health care administrator. She got the Health Center up and operating, and ran it for six years. Both the health care administrator and executive director are PRS – not Mirabella – employees.

Sharon was guided by PRS' chief healthcare officer, Debbie Rayburn. First on their agenda was getting an inspection of the second and third floors by the state fire marshal. He had to sign off before the state and Medicare



Then-server Victoria Michalchuk makes sure Pauline and John Deaver enjoy dining in Aria's kitchen in this 2013 photo staged and shot by Todd Albert

could do the inspections required before the Health Center could get licensed.

The fire marshal – known in the nursing home world for his by-the-book rigidity – came into the brand new building and required Mirabella to make some \$30,000 worth of changes – including rebuilding a wall that was an eighth of an inch off from its required eight foot length.

With all the inspections and licensing done, Sharon hosted tours for hospital discharge planners and others, aggressively marketing the new skilled nursing and memory care units, convincing them Mirabella should be their "preferred provider."

The advantage of that designation?

"Referrals," Sharon told 3550. Particularly of patients with insurance that pays well.

Initially, the Health Center was reluctant to take – and because it was new, hospitals were reluctant to send – high-acuity cases, which are patients whose serious illness or physical conditions require intense staff attention.

Soon enough, the preferred provider relationships were in place and that brought in money and sometimes challenges.

Some high-dollar donors or other VIPs sent by hospitals required special handling, including heightened security arrangements. Not surprisingly, some of those patients were a handful.

Sharon oversaw Mirabella's firing up a home care program in 2012, establishment of a telemedicine partnership with OHSU in 2013 and its participation with OHSU in the Complete Joint Replacement program in 2015.

Although Mirabella officially opened to residents on Sept. 1, 2010, its first resident beat that by a day.

Retired orthodontist Guy Woods moved in Aug. 31, 2010. Soon, he had a Bistro dessert named for him and was generally regarded as "Mr. Mirabella" until his passing.

As residents moved in, the structure of the community took shape.

Soon, there was a RAMP – Residents' Assn. of Mirabella Portland. But before there could be a RAMP



Guy Woods, "Mr. Mirabella," community's first resident

there had to be, you guessed it, bylaws.

Enter a committee led by Linda Wood.

That group pored over seven sample CCRC bylaws provided by Anthony Sabatini, and considered every nuance.

From January to May 2011, the committee met, and met, and met. The meetings grew longer, were characterized, Linda says,

by "extensive discussion on every point," and finally reached "consensus and compromise."

By May, Linda says, "we were all very tired, but had a draft that included the RAMP council, advisory committees that worked with management, and association committees that were self-contained."

Two votes and some additional tinkering later, the bylaws were passed by a majority of residents voting, and RAMP was ready for its first election.

Perry Walker, elected in October 2011 as RAMP's first president, remembers "tremendous enthusiasm" and optimism, and standing room only crowds at meetings in Willamette Hall. "Everything was new," Perry says.

He worked to ensure the association was a group where ideas came from residents and worked their way up to administration.

Anthony, the first executive director, was "rock solid," Perry says, happy to have residents talk issues out before bringing them to his door.

So, there are fine apartments and what future RAMP president Claire Weber would come to call the "student council" in place, but what was resident life actually going to be like in the building?

That fell to the programs committee, led for years by co-chairs Muriel Mendonca and the late Nancy Glerum, who Muriel calls "a high-energy doer."

They arranged for entertainment Monday through Wednesday nights. Performers were not paid, but were treated to dinner.

Muriel and husband Ron managed the sound and took care of arrangements. If it seemed as if Muriel was everywhere in those days, there is a reason for it. She once kept track of her hours and realized she was working 32 hours a week providing programs for Mirabella.

In the early days, Thursday nights offered movies, chosen and presented by Curtis Guthrie.

As the years progressed, the perfectly dreadful audio-visual setup in Willamette Hall was improved, becoming merely rather dreadful.



PRS' chief financial officer Mary Schoegg. Photo courtesy of PRS, Inc.

The nature of live entertainment changed as well.

Thanks to the persistence of Walter Greizerstein, who forged a partnership with the music department at Portland State University, student and professional musicians became regulars at Mirabella, and were paid for their performances.

Walter has brought in varying musical genres, leaning heavily toward classical. He has also performed himself, offering violin concerts.

More than anyone, Walter is responsible for creation of the cultural enrichment fund within the Mirabella Foundation, to

finance entertainment.

The Mirabella Portland Foundation itself is a success story.

Starting from scratch to build a 501(c)(3) corporation, it took a few years for the foundation to find its footing and become a successful charity, with assets well over \$700,000.

Its seven funds support a variety of Mirabella causes, helping promote resident and staff welfare and financial security.

Toni Tidman has long been one of the most active foundation supporters. Along with various work partners over the years, she has made and sold various treasures, run the back alley sale, sold tickets to events and worked consistently to shovel money into the foundation.

(see First Decade p. 28)

(from First Decade p. 27)

Along the way, it has used a donation from the Rolf Glerum family to purchase the NancyVan, a wheelchair-friendly vehicle to haul residents to medical appointments. The foundation has given away thousands of dollars in scholarships to employees, helped a number of other employees experiencing personal emergencies, and built a resident assistance fund – not yet drawn on, thank heavens – to protect residents who suffer economic calamity through no fault of their own. (See separate story by Ed Parker.)

Residents have used another vehicle to help employees, too.

The YES Project – for Your Employees’ Scholarships – was launched by now-former residents Dave and Linda McCammon, and does not involve Mirabella administration.

It offers “follow your dream” scholarship assistance to hourly employees, regardless of their field of study, and



Anthony Sabatini and HR director Teri Terrill pour champagne prior to Mirabella Foundation 2012 Valentine’s Day fundraising dinner

is administered by the Oregon Community Foundation. The YES Project is still active today, with resident John Branchflower offering information to all interested employees.

Another change came to Mirabella in June 2013, when the first issue of 3550 Magazine was published.

The following year, PRS’ financial wizard Mary Schoegg wrapped up a refinancing deal that put Mirabella on a more solid footing.

“The initial financing structure was a (periodically renewable) letter of credit from mostly foreign banks,” Mary told 3550.

## Our Original Gangsters

There are 21 Mirabella residents who qualify as “Septemberistas” – or OGs, if you prefer.

Part of the first month’s move-in of 44 people, here are those still calling Mirabella home, in order of their move-in date:

Ron and Muriel Mendonca  
Shirley Papé  
Ginny Chase  
Irene Kleen  
Lois Wheeler  
Mary Bosch  
Lew and Jill Seager  
Curtis Guthrie  
Ann Crumpacker  
Ralph Merrill  
Carol Evans  
Pieter and Greta Rol  
Lois Urman  
John and Yvonne Branchflower  
Lisa Andrus-Rivera  
Laurie Meigs  
Dona Morris

“Before 2008, it was a no-brainer to renew a letter of credit,” she said. “After 2008, those banks all got out of the U.S. market” and the hunt for fresh lenders was on.

Because Mirabella had been able to discount prices in the recession, thus filling the building with paying residents, it was attractive to other lenders.

She reached agreement on a 30-year loan at a fixed 5.35%.

“Of all the financing, Mirabella Portland is the one I’m most proud of,” she said. “It’s a really good structure.”

This was not Mary’s first rodeo. In something less than a year, she concluded re-fis of Mirabella Portland, Holladay Park Plaza, Cascade Manor, Rogue Valley Manor and Trinity Terrace.

All are open to refinancing after 10 years, she says, “so I’ll have to do this all over again.

“It’s very likely we could refinance in 2024, but we’ll evaluate that between now and then.”

Okay, about the television shows.

In the 10 years since the doors swung open, Mirabella has had supporting roles in three prime-time television series: Leverage, Portlandia and Grimm.

For Leverage, the Bistro got a sign in Arabic as in the show it was located in Dubai, and a weekend car chase was staged along SW River Parkway.

No residents were harmed in the making of those shows. ■

## Lois Wheeler

by Pamela Lindholm-Levy

**L**OIS WHEELER REMEMBERS THE FIRST TIME SHE LEARNED ABOUT Mirabella.

She and her late husband, Allen, lived in West Linn, and had begun to think about a retirement community. They went to the first meetings, they saw the model apartment in the sales office north on SW Moody.



Lois Wheeler photo by Ron Mendonca.

They were impressed, they bought in.

As charter members, they were invited to the ground-breaking ceremony, and each turned over a shovelful of soil on the building site. Across the street was a party in what is now Caruthers Park but was then an empty lot. The Portland State University band played, and there were refreshments and anticipation.

The Wheelers kept an eye on the progress of the building when they drove to and from West Linn on I-5. As Mirabella grew, future residents were invited to a dinner at the Governor (now Sentinel) Hotel. Each single or couple was given something like a lottery-number ball with a number written on it.

"Depending on your number you were able to choose, in order," Lois remembers.

She and Allen sighed when they read #210 on their ball. But fate was with them.

Initially they chose an apartment on the 5th floor after showing their son the model and the apartment plans on paper. This was not their dream apartment, but wait!

Adam Payn, who was the sales manager, told them someone had backed out of a third floor choice. Lois and

Allen jumped at the opportunity. This apartment would overlook Caruthers Park, eventually, the West Hills, and the southwest. They loved it.

At last, Mirabella was open. Two residents per day could move in. Friday, Sept. 3, 2010, Lois and Allen became Septemberistas.

After the moving dust settled that evening, Lois and Allen's only dinner choice was the Bistro. The building interior was finished only to the 11th floor. At first all the residents sat at one table, then two, then three as more and more people moved in.

Lois remembers that the food was delicious. Everyone was friendly, all with the same anticipation, experiencing the new world of retirement living.

And what did they find in the South Waterfront in 2010? The park was not developed. The John Ross and the Meriwether were up. You could walk to the river but not as far as today's path takes us.

The Zidell property was still making barges. There was always an announcement of an impending launch, and residents were able to watch.

"The fireboat came with water plumes," Lois says. A newly christened barge slipped into the Willamette.

Above it all, an osprey pair nested every year, and residents watched and reported sightings. Were the birds incubating? Were there hatchlings? Were mom and dad bringing fish? Were the babies visible, and how big? How exciting when they fledged, and yet bittersweet because they were gone.

About the time the ospreys left, the dahlia garden, a block away, was in full bloom, and Lois bought flowers there.

In the decade since Lois became a Septemberista, many things have changed. A progressive eye disease took the last of her sight in 2014 and she has lived in an all-black world since. She lost Allen in 2017 and living alone and blind she has become inspirational in her independence and known to her adoring friends as tenacious, gracious and stunningly smart.

Lois' family knows she made the right choice when she became a Mirabella Septemberista. ■

# Happy Tenth Anniversary, Mirabella Portland!

# Still Meeting and Overcoming Challenge of Covid-19

by Pete Swan

**W**ARILY. THAT'S HOW MIRABELLA AND PACIFIC Retirement Services (PRS) management approached Oregon's gradual reopening of normal activities in late spring, reasoning that maintaining some restrictions offered the best chance to keep this elderly population safe from the Covid-19 virus.

States that opened up widest and soonest saw sudden increases in infection rates that made health professionals fear an exponential increase of Covid-19 infections. In Florida, Texas, Arizona, and California, that fear has alarmingly come true.

Geography and proximity played large roles in infection rates; meat packing plants were particularly hard hit while areas of low population density like Wyoming and Montana were lightly impacted.



In Oregon, the Portland metro area, not unexpectedly, dealt with the greatest number of Covid-19 cases, while the eastern part of the state and the southern beach counties initially had few. A jump in new cases after most of Oregon went into phase one of reopening caused Gov. Kate Brown to put the brakes on any further loosening of restrictions, which delayed Portland's start back to something approaching normal.

The massive protests of the Black Lives Matter movement raised concerns here and elsewhere of a swift spread of the virus among protesters, their families, friends and other contacts.

With all the uncertainty, one prediction suggesting the national death toll could hit 240,000 before

winter, and mounting data showing people over 65 were far more vulnerable to dying from the virus, Mirabella approached even a "new normal" cautiously, to the approval of some and the frustration of others.

Aria East reopened in late June for dining-by-appointment. Diners have their temperatures taken on the way in, masks are required while entering or leaving, and social distancing must be maintained at tables when more than one person or couple is present.

Residents can again see variety on the in-Aria dinner menu. We will still not have the ability to entertain outside guests or family.

Residents were so glad to see each other that we had to be reminded to keep masks on and hold distance when stopping to greet friends on our way to and from our own tables.

The Dolce Vita bistro reopened for lunch and dinner to-go orders, and opened for dinner with a limited number of resident diners.

The fifth-floor terrace opened for persons wishing to carry their meals (or a good book) outside or to use the barbecues (with proper training).

Our servers, who have faithfully delivered meals to our apartments, are gradually being reassigned to more "normal" dining room duties.

Activities, for the most part, are not in full swing because of the congregation and distancing problems.

After a spike in Covid-19 cases in mid-July, Gov. Brown issued a statewide ban on indoor gatherings of more than 10 people.

Thus, meetings and events are not yet greenlighted for Willamette Hall, the Park View room, or the Skyview room.

Use of shared materials, jigsaw puzzles for example, is strongly discouraged due to the difficulties of sanitizing.

The Fitness Center is open by appointment only and is presently limited to one person (or couple) at a time.

Bryant Symkowiak, Mirabella's wellness coordinator, arranges the workout appointments, sanitizes equipment between users and continually works on plans to make the gym available to more residents more often.

Exercise classes by Bryant and some outside contractors continue to be available on channel 981 and Zoom. Some dispersed-group classes may be a possibility if and when we get to Phase 2 or Phase 3.



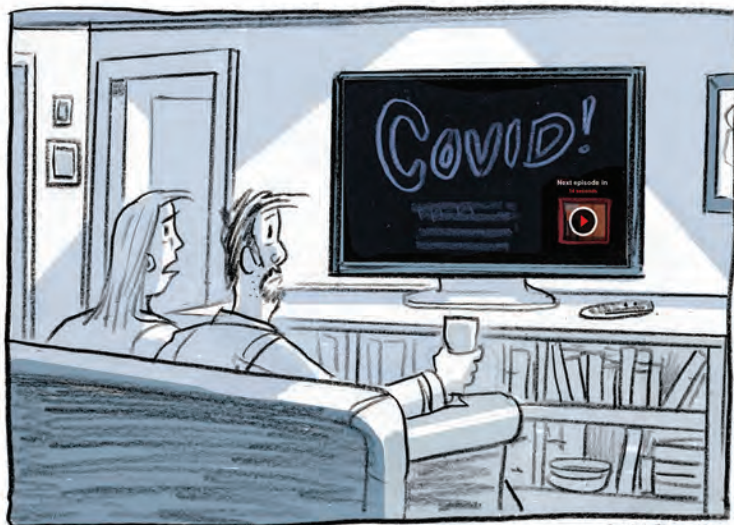
Access to the artists studio continued with a limit of two persons at a time, social distancing, and no sharing of materials (thus no classes).

The woodshop opened to qualified users, with a limit of two persons, distancing, and a user-performed sanitizing protocol. Reopening of the Mirabella library for pre-scheduled users (one at a time) has been a popular change and in mid-August increased to once a week.

The valet staff has been helping deliver packages, and picking up pre-ordered groceries from Zupan's. The valets continue to be available for medical appointment trips and for bringing us our vehicles. Due to social distancing requirements, there are presently no plans for grocery buses, although transportation boss Rick Thompson and his staff are considering a resumption of that service on some limited basis.

Buses are not yet available for travel club/supper club excursions. Airport deliveries and pickups are theoretically available, but who knows when anyone will want to fly. The replacement of either of the buses is on hold until the Covid-19 situation is past.

Access to the Health Center and assisted living area remain restricted until Covid-19 is behind us.



*"Wait--how many seasons is this?"*

CartoonStock.com

Relaxation of those restrictions is largely controlled by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the state's Department of Human Services and the Oregon Health Authority.

In another effort to keep an evil virus from our building, residents who spend at least one overnight away from Mirabella have been subject to a 14-day in-apartment quarantine upon their return. Beginning Aug. 1, they were asked to contact administration for current protocols once home.

In-apartment housecleaning – if desired by the resident – began with a "deep cleaning" process, to be followed by scheduled regular cleaning.

Housekeepers must fill out a daily health questionnaire and have a temperature check upon arrival. They also don a new set of gloves as they enter each apartment.

There certainly have been financial impacts attributable to Covid-19.

Food service costs have risen due to disposable packaging for delivery to apartments and the absence of revenue from guest meals.

Mirabella Portland has applied for and received a grant of roughly \$150,000 under the federal CARES program and will likely seek a further grant at the next application window.

Increased resident use of second and third floor beds has reduced their availability to more profitable outside patients, with more financial fallout.

One bit of good news is that no staff were let go or furloughed due to Covid-19 and the retention rate is high.

Some of the more subtle – but nonetheless serious – Covid-19 impacts could be depression, anxiety, and loneliness.

So, what activities helped keep us cheerful, stimulated, and engaged?

Pamela Levy is working on her second novel, a generational sequel to "Count the Mountains." Because it involves 19th Century life and railroad building in Colorado, Pam has been reviewing old newspaper stories and photos. She also loves her weekly visits to the horse she boards with a nice family in the Chehalem Mountains.

Larry Levy is playing lots of bridge on the Internet. He enjoys cooking and says he is very willing to share his hundreds of recipes with fellow residents. He's also an avid reader of non-fiction, primarily American history and sociology.

Hebe Greizerstein also cooks. She has been trying some exotic new recipes, knitting a poncho with a complex pattern, entering (and winning) Internet solitaire tournaments, and preparing for her Science Interest Group presentation. And, of course, she is painting. Recent work includes family portraits and a painting of Lorenzo Ghiberti's famous sculpted doors – the Gates of Paradise – entering the Baptistery in Florence.

Joni and Ed Weiner continue their auditing of courses at PSU (now online) with subjects like comparative political systems and Shakespearian comedies. Ed's book clubs – he belongs to five from the Bay Area to Portland – give him plenty to read.

(see Covid-19 p. 32)

(from Covid-19 p. 31)

He uses Zoom for those clubs and for weekly chats with his brothers, and even for virtual Happy Hours with San Francisco friends. He attacks a Washington Post crossword every day.

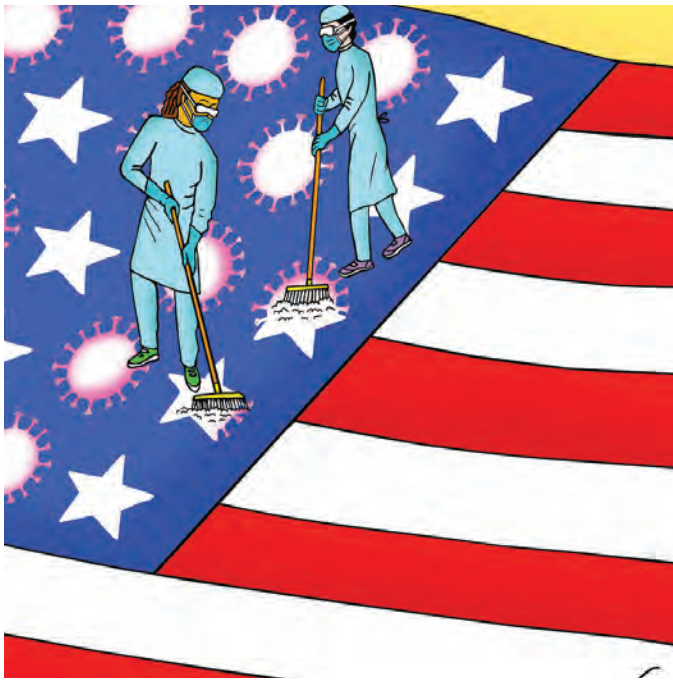
Joni tends her raised-bed garden and the many pots on their deck, and works in the Woodshop (along with Toni Tidman, Kim Batcheller, Margaret Toppel and Linda McCaw) to make unique, whimsical bird houses for the second floor and to be sold, with proceeds to the Mirabella Foundation.

Anne Morris is a passionate gardener and pursues that interest in four different Portland locations. She and Marge Carothers share a raised bed at the Moody site. Fred spends time in the Woodshop and has organized the classes that have led to a nice increase in usage.

Dan Hole's avocation is cooking. He tries new recipes and returns to old favorites several days each month.

And we are all grateful to film maven and Channel 981 producer Rosemary Hole for a delightful variety of movies that entertain us and often bring on warm memories.

Several nights a week Mikki Lipsey steps up to offer other interesting performances, from modern dance to opera and Shakespearian plays.



Though the nation has seen serious Covid-19-related problems with defective test kits, premature re-opening of bars, and chaotic disorganization in purchasing PPE and ventilators, life at Mirabella has continued relatively smoothly. ■

## Foundation Offers Lifeline if Covid-19 Kills Your Assets

by Ed Parker

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CREATED A FINANCIAL RISK AS well as a medical risk.

Can everybody afford to stay at Mirabella if the pandemic is followed by a financial crash?

The answer is probably yes.

We wouldn't have been permitted to move in unless we showed Mirabella that we would be unlikely to run out of money. But some combination of three major risks could combine to make the unlikely happen.

We could live a decade or two longer than the life expectancy tables indicate for the average. Aren't most Mirabella residents above average?

We could have a medical problem that doesn't kill us but keeps medical bills going for a long time.

And we could have a financial crash that wipes out much of our retirement savings.

Even in that case, we have a safety net. The Mirabella Foundation has a resident assistance fund. The balance of that fund on June 30, 2020 was \$680,230.

If we can't pay all of our Mirabella bills, we can cover the difference with loans from that fund at 5 percent interest. The loan would be secured by our refundable entrance fee, but the payments could continue beyond that amount.

If the loan amount grew to be larger than the refundable fee and our estate had no other assets to repay it, the rest of the foundation payments would be a gift rather than a loan.

Be mindful: The resident assistance fund only supports residents who run out of money **through no fault of their own**. We can't give all of our money away to our children and then seek charity from fellow residents.

The resident assistance fund would be a better safety net if it had millions of dollars instead of hundreds of thousands of dollars. But it could be replenished by loan repayments and by generous donations from other residents.

When the Foundation's employee hardship fund ran out of money in the first months of the pandemic, generous residents stepped forward with donations to boost the fund to a level higher than it had ever been. We may hope that the same spirit of generosity would replenish a depleted resident assistance fund. ■



# Healthy Diet, Exercise Can Fight Off Chronic Inflammation

by Rita Brickman Effros

**T**HE WORD INFLAMMATION HAS RECENTLY ENTERED THE common lexicon due, in part, to the negative role this process may play in Covid-19.

While short term, “acute” inflammation is part of the normal immune response, a prolonged or heightened inflammatory state does not bode well for recovery from the infection.

Inflammation is a natural response to a threat. It is necessary to prevent infection, fight illness, and heal damaged tissues. But when this process gets out of control and becomes chronic, inflammation increases risks of preventable diseases.

Brief exposure to soluble inflammatory substances (including cytokines) is a major component of recovery from disease.

However, a long term, chronic inflammatory state can eventually start damaging healthy cells, tissues and organs. Over time, this can lead to damage to our DNA and death of certain tissues.

An abnormally high level of inflammatory factors is associated with deleterious outcomes in Covid-19. The so-called “cytokine storm” has been linked to unexpected ICU admission, and sometimes death in certain previously healthy individuals.

Inflammation also seems to play a major role in a novel form of Covid-19 seen in the pediatric population.

Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) is a condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.

Many of these children show positive antibody responses to the virus, suggesting previous exposure, actual current infection, or both.

Infection with the current coronavirus is not the only situation linked to chronic inflammation. The phenomenon is so common in older adults that the term “inflammaging” has been coined to describe this scenario.

Chronic inflammation contributes to many of the diseases commonly associated with aging. Examples include rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer’s disease and cancer. Treatment for some of these conditions involves medications that specifically suppress certain inflammatory factors.

Inflammation can also impact the brain. Some of the brain regions that can be affected by inflammatory

substances include the hypothalamus (involved in sleep, feeding, metabolism); and the hippocampus (learning, short-term memory, navigation).

Given the role of chronic inflammation in both Covid-19 and aging, it is worth considering certain established ways to diminish inflammation. These strategies will not only affect overall health, but may also enhance resistance to this devastating disease.

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*Inflammation-producing cells also result from high levels of anxiety and psychological stress.*

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What factors contribute to the chronic inflammation associated with aging? Fat tissue is one of the leading culprits.

We often think of fat as being an inert substance, but it turns out that fat cells, and even immune cells within fat tissue, contribute to inflammation.

An experiment in laboratory mice underscores the role of fat in inflammation. When fat tissue that surrounds various internal organs (so-called visceral fat) was surgically removed from the mice, the level of inflammation was significantly reduced.

In extrapolating this finding to humans, it should be noted that visceral fat is not the fat tissue that is removed during liposuction. Visceral fat can only be reduced by weight loss.

Exercise is one of the main strategies for weight loss. Interestingly, it is also a way to reduce inflammation. It turns out that the contraction of skeletal muscle cells leads to production of substances called myokines that can keep inflammation from getting out of hand.

The value of exercise in combating chronic inflammation has been underscored in many studies. A report from Dr. Janet Lord at the Institute of Inflammation and Aging in the UK highlights this link. She showed that folks who took fewer than 3,000 steps per day had much higher levels of inflammation than those who took 10,000 steps per day.

Dr. Lord emphasizes that even during periods of social isolation, daily exercise is still possible. No special equipment is required for such maneuvers as sit-to-stand, leg raising, or going up and down steps. These are all helpful in reducing inflammation.

(see Inflammation p. 34)

(from Inflammation p. 33)

Regular exercise is also helpful in terms of sleep. It is well-documented that insomnia and sleep deprivation are associated with increased levels of inflammation.

Multiple studies have shown a clear link between reduced sleep and two of the main inflammatory substances in our bloodstream, IL-6 and CRP (Interleukin-6 and C-reactive protein). In fact, doctors often include a CRP test for complex health problems because it is a marker of chronic inflammation.

Sleep is also related to maintaining circadian rhythm. This is basically a 24-hour internal clock that is running in the background of our brains and cycles between sleepiness and alertness at regular intervals.

It is estimated that 82 percent of our genes are activated according to this cyclical pattern. This may partially explain the relationship between poor sleep and increased inflammation.

Insomnia is also associated with an increase in so-called senescent cells. These are cells that have undergone many rounds of cell division. The ends of their chromosomes, known as telomeres, have gotten critically short.

Importantly, even though the cells are senescent/old, they do not die. Rather they remain in our bodies and start producing inflammatory substances.

Inflammation-producing senescent cells also result from high levels of anxiety and psychological stress. Strategies such as meditation, tai chi and exercise can simultaneously reduce stress and increase sleep quality.

Senescent cells and the resulting inflammation may also influence the response to vaccines. Although there is no vaccine yet available against Covid-19, data from flu vaccine studies may be relevant.

Senescent cells can actually be measured in the laboratory, and it turns out that persons with higher proportions of senescent immune cells had a significantly reduced antibody response to the flu vaccine.

In addition to exercise, weight loss and increased sleep, what else can we do to reduce inflammation? Diet is a key

factor here. Eating a nutritious and healthful diet can be a challenge in normal times, and truly difficult during isolated living.

Nonetheless, reduced intake of processed foods and increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables should be a goal.

Related to nutrition is what is known as the gut microbiome. We are not alone in our bodies. Inside each of us are trillions of microorganisms, including viruses, bacteria and fungi. Many of these bugs reside in our gut.

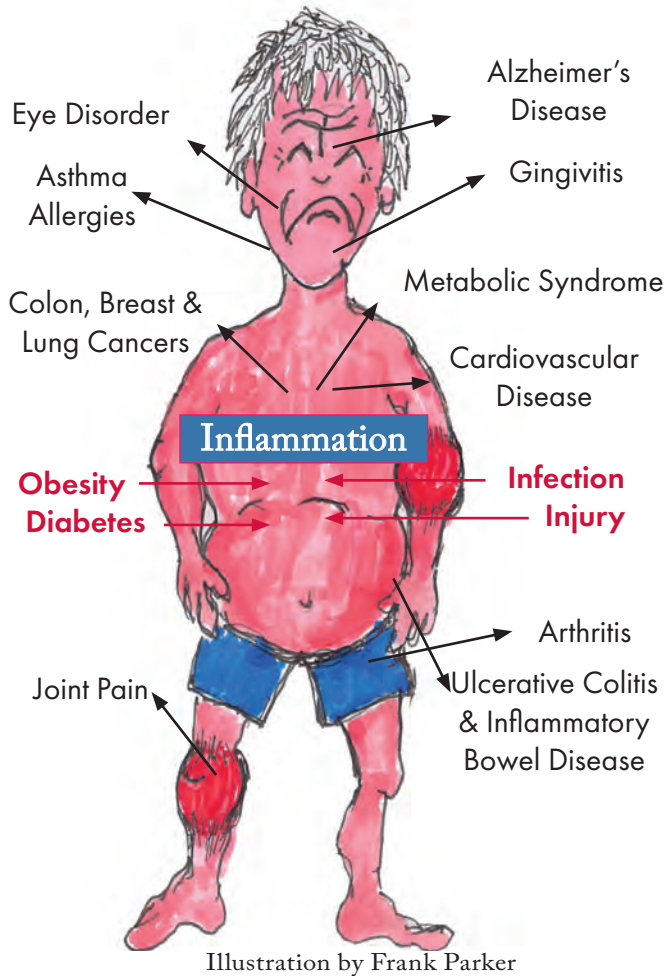
It turns out that the gut microbiome can affect multiple facets of our immune system.

Importantly, substances produced by microorganisms in our gut can contribute to inflammation. The effects occur not only in our intestines, but also in anatomically distant sites, including the brain.

There is also evidence that the microbiome influences our response to infection and vaccination. This is clearly relevant to Covid-19.

A well-balanced and varied diet plays a key role in maintaining a healthy microbiome. Although short term treatment with antibiotics can affect our gut microbiome, it seems that the balance can be restored rather quickly by dietary factors.

In sum, reducing inflammation by lifestyle choices allows us to play an active role in our overall health. This is increasingly important during the current pandemic. ■



# Quarantine Diary

by Nancy Moss

**W**ALKING THE GREENWAY WE PASS A MAN HOLDING A tennis ball. In front of him sits a brown dog of indeterminate breed: alert, tense. The man throws the ball. The dog runs, leaps – and the ball hits him on the nose. He runs to the ball, takes it back to the man. As we watch, the tossed ball hits him on the muzzle, the side; again and again he leaps for it and misses. Again and again he carries it back to the man and waits, tense and eager.

I wonder if this is a metaphor, decide not to pursue the thought.

## II

We are walking along the greenway when a little black snake, moving in a sinuous S curve, crosses our path and disappears into the shrubbery. A little gift from nature.

## III

A resident emails that he has finished a number of books from our library, will pass them on. I write back that I want them; he delivers them to our ledge. With the library closed, I pass on magazines to neighbors. A friend calls to tell me she has extra surgical masks, will put a few on our ledge. We have become, to an extent, a barter economy.

## IV

In her Zoom Cardio Combo class, Ally Britton moves us quickly from one step to another. Hustle (four steps up and back: piece of cake), Hamstring Curl (knee back, tricky when she switches from single to double). I am rather proud of my heel tap (foot forward, heel tapping), enjoy that fine, loose feeling of swinging my arms as “Happy Days Are Here Again,” muted in the background, gives us the beat. On the other hand, new steps baffle me, especially if they involve moving both hands and feet. When she picks up the pace, I am glad the images of class participants, shown above the large one of Ally, are postage stamp size.

“Mambo right!” arms up, step forward. In my mind, I’m part of “A Chorus Line.” ■

# My Covid-19 Survival Kitty

by Linda Smeltzer

Tame city kitty; nothing wild,  
Pretty baby; a tower child.  
A shelter cat in old folks’ home  
Rescues me; I’m not alone.

With silly kitty, days unwind.

Long day ahead, he helps make bed  
And hides his head beneath the spread.  
Still as time – look, I cannot find  
Until I spy a tail left behind.

With silly kitty, days unwind.

He finds new toys in rags and rugs,  
And chases shadows, window bugs.  
Tries luring birds: “Come through the glass!”  
For both of us it helps time pass.

Home-stay dismay just flies away.

My sugar-foot with four white feet,  
His name is “Honey” ‘cause he’s sweet.  
He’s taught me lots at eighty-two;  
Forget Corona!, off the shoes!

Snuggly kitty’s brought me sleep.

A bunch of fun, a pure delight,  
R-e-l-a-x, watch me, ignore our plight.  
Just take a snooze through TV news,  
Make purrrfect tune to lonesome blues.

It should be plain, he keeps me sane. ■

# Old Magazine Quiz

by Rolf Glerum

**R**EMEMBER THOSE DAYS BEFORE THE INTERNET? OR NETFLIX? OR cellphones? Or even television? How in the world did we pass the time? We read a magazine, of course.

Here are 10 magazines that are no longer published but are certainly remembered by our generation. Not so with those younger, however. After you match the clues with the covers, show this to your grandkids and see how they do. About 3 out of 10, I'll bet.

**A** Gee, Pat, you're really serious about this, aren't you? Don't worry, your first issue is in the mail. Published 1924 to 1950.

**B** There is no connection here with Harvard, but there is with certain Harvard alumni. Famous cover features a dog

with a gun to its head, "If you don't buy this magazine, we'll kill this dog." Published 1970 to 1998.

**C** Who knew that the place where we live is named after a women's fashion magazine? Thankfully, we are still here, unlike our namesake. Published 1989 to 2000.

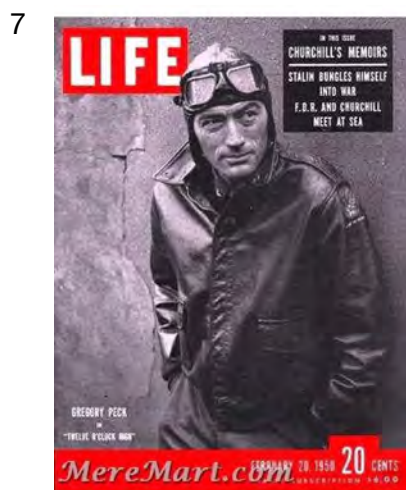
**D** The first all-travel magazine to be published after WWII, when people were once again traveling and vacationing. Famous contributors included Truman Capote, James Michener and E.B. White. Published 1946 to 1977.

**E** This is the oldest (by one year) weekly/biweekly magazine in this group. Famous for its Norman Rockwell covers, as well as the birthplace of the Tugboat Annie series. Published 1897 to 1969.

Connect the letter to the number:

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H
- I
- J
- K

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11



**F** Another old-timer among us, it was 69 years old when it died. You might think it was a trade magazine for coal miners, but actually it was named after its founder. Published 1888 to 1957.

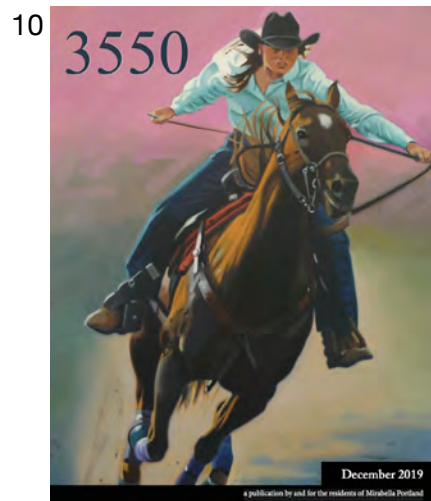
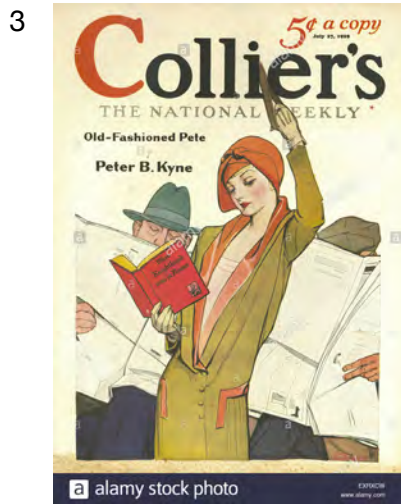
**G** Actually founded in 1883, its modern version as a photograph-heavy weekly began in 1936. Famous wartime photographers included Robert Capa and Margaret Bourke-White. Best known photo it published was a nurse being kissed by a sailor in Times Square on VJ Day, August 14, 1945. Published 1936 to 2000.

**H** This old lady stands out as having a stable of writers that could fill a library. Here are a few: Rachel Carson, John Steinbeck, Shirley Jackson, Willa Cather and P.G. Wodehouse. Published 1873 to 1957.

**I** Geared to “the smart young woman” as its editors claimed, this high-fashion magazine was a top-shelf favorite throughout the 80s and 90s. It included in its August 1961 “college issue” a photo of UCLA class president Willette Murphy, who didn’t realize she was making history as the first African-American model to appear in a mainstream fashion magazine. Published 1935 to 2001.

**J** Another venerable distaff member of the out-of-print magazine club, this popular publication became in 1903 the first American magazine to reach one million subscribers. Published 1883 to 2016.

**K** This is just to see if you are awake and paying attention. A relative baby (seven years old, “going on eight”), this magazine is healthy and plans to stick around.



For answers see p. 39

## Mirabella Players Plan Zoom Show

**T**HE MIRABELLA PLAYERS ARE NOT ONES TO SHY AWAY FROM technological challenges.

Long a favorite of live audiences in Willamette Hall, the thespian troupe plans a test not only of the actors' stage presence when there is no stage, but is going to rely on a techno-combo for its next performance, Sept. 10, to be seen on Channel 981.

That performance features two short pieces, the monologue "Dear Abigail" about Abigail Scott Duniway, and the 10-minute play, "Love Lyrics." Both were written by Players founder Nancy Moss.

"Dear Abigail" stars Mikki Lipsey. "Love Lyrics" stars Mikki, Ron Mendonca and John Toppel.

Newspaper publisher, editor and writer, Abigail Duniway wrote an advice column for her paper, the New Northwest, from 1871 to 1876.

A suffragette who toured Oregon and Idaho with Susan B. Anthony, Duniway found time to raise six children, teach and help run a farm.

President of Original Practice Shakespeare's board, Mikki studied Shakespearean acting in Lenox, Mass. and has been an actor for 60 years.

"Love Lyrics" portrays an irritable couple who have to contend with a singing waiter as well as each other.

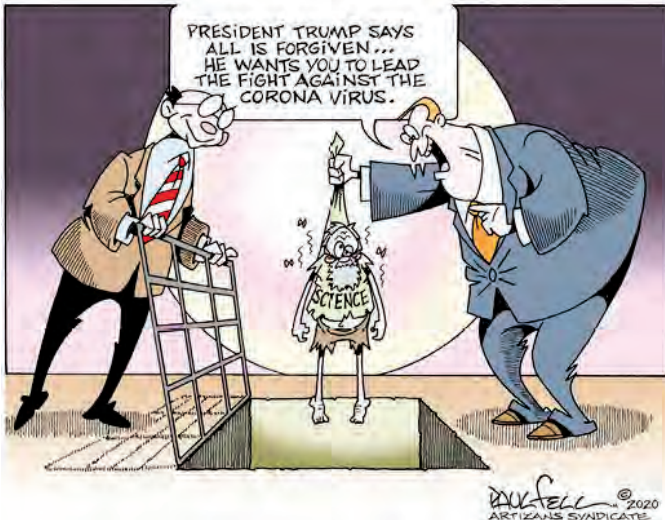
All the rehearsals have been done on Zoom, as will the performance itself – with a hitch. The audience will not use Zoom to watch. Instead, Mirabella's merry magicians who know about such things will convert the live on-Zoom acting to a format for viewing on the in-house channel.

Some of that requires magic. For example, dialogue between actors whose characters are in the same room but whose bodies are not, or passing a prop from one character to another.

Will it work? Tune in to Channel 981 to find out. ■



*"I've decided to purge our material goods, starting with your crap."*



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**Answers to Magazine  
Cover Quiz**

- |      |     |     |      |
|------|-----|-----|------|
| A=11 | D=1 | G=7 | J=8  |
| B=4  | E=6 | H=5 | K=10 |
| C=2  | F=3 | I=9 |      |

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