

3550





Nancy Moss

Co-Editor



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President

Hands crippled by arthritis, Henri Matisse moved in his last years from painting to producing intricate, startling paper cut-outs in brilliant colors. Descending into Alzheimer's, Willem de Kooning created delicate abstract paintings. Advancing years can alter creativity; the potential for development remains.

I sometimes wake up at night with the solution to a writing problem suddenly in mind; what part of my brain was "working" while I slept? Creativity is mysterious, but Mirabella offers residents many opportunities to explore their deep potential.

Covid permitting, the art committee offers classes like watercolor painting, needlework and Japanese braiding. In addition to having fun, committee chairman Dan Hole says, these activities provide residents a chance to develop their artistic skill.

For residents interested in music, Allied Arts will continue its 80-year-old Portland tradition of a monthly musical club with its monthly program at Mirabella.

A typical Allied Arts meeting consisted of a Debussy piano solo and a Bach recorder duet with a sing-along scheduled. Leader Judy Seubert says "any resident who would like to become part of the group is welcome" and can either "join in or sit back and enjoy." And there's always singing in the shower.

I have been leading a small group in mini-memoir writing that has explored teenage crushes, early job experiences and Midwest farm life as seen through grandparents' lives. Putting an experience in words recreates it in a new way. When, for instance, did our parents change from big people who kept us safe to puzzling, sometimes flawed human beings?

Proust wasn't the only one to be drawn back to the past by a seemingly small event.

Tapping the springs of creativity, whatever form it takes, can have unexpected results; Wallace Stevens' poem "Sense of the Sleight-of-Hand Man" mentions "Life that is fluent even in the wintriest bronze."

Approaching winter, we may find this an encouraging thought.

The past 18 months have been difficult. We have endured Covid constraints: reduced face-time with families, restrictions on travel, isolation in our apartments and limited availability of health care. Our ability to interact with fellow residents has been compromised: restricted dining services, Zoom instead of personal interaction and no assembling to attend performances and see movies. Within the new reality we are now beginning to face, we must focus on renewing a socially warm, interactive and supportive culture in our home.

The last half year has seen 41 move-ins in independent living, about a 15% change. We heartily welcome them into this special community. They, as well as our longer-tenured residents, have varied life and travel experiences, success in their professions, engaging hobbies and a variety of charitable interests.

The collective nature of the residents at Mirabella, not surprisingly, continues to change with the newer and, yes, younger residents. The admirable Mirabella pioneers set into place the principles that encourage social interaction, established a giving and supportive culture, led activities to meet resident and staff needs and wrote the bylaws and procedures for how the RAMP structure was to work to embrace our values.

The pioneers, understandably, want to pass responsibilities to newer residents. At the other end of the length-of-residence barbell, newer residents bring fresh ideas with a vigor and an ability to engage in activities in their new home. We urge them to attend meetings of the committees and interest groups and to volunteer to help.

Doing so is an excellent way of meeting fellow residents and establishing friendships.

Your RAMP Council will focus on helping support these shifts, acknowledging and building on the contributions of the pioneers, as well as embracing new residents' talents and interests. We welcome suggestions from all.



Front Cover:
John and Sandy
Foreman walk down
Pennoyer Street, littered
with fallen leaves. Photo
by Robert French.



Back Cover:
During the first year
of Covid, Johanna
King walked the waterfront
in Port Townsend, Wash.
One morning a bald eagle
landed on a dock and let
her approach to within
15 feet.

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Staff Vaccine Rate Rises to 95%

Executive director Sharon McCartney said that, after the state mandate on Oct. 18, Mirabella staff vaccination rate is 95%, with the missing few mostly due to religious exemptions.

Unvaccinated staff must take two Covid tests a week and wear an N95 mask.

There will be no exemptions for new hires and new contractors, including health aides.

Because religion can be a “party of one,” Sharon says, religious exemptions can be due to deeply held personal beliefs as well as a particular faith. Most of these have to do with involvement of stem cells, which some see as aborted fetuses, in vaccine preparation.

Mirabella staff vaccine rate had previously held steady at 80 percent.

Mirabella Players to Present SantaLand Diaries

Covid permitting, the Mirabella Players will present David Sedaris’s “SantaLand Diaries” on Tuesday, Dec. 14, in Willamette Hall. Residents Judy Seubert and Rosie Hole will provide music.

SantaLand Diaries, adapted by Joe Mantello, debuted at New York City’s Atlantic Theatre Company with Timothy Olyphant in the Sedaris role.



Photo: Richard Mountis

Janet Schmitt receives her Covid booster.

Moss Play Accepted on Podcast

Cheatout Podcast will include Nancy Moss’s 10-minute play “Anna: Love and Loss,” a monologue adapted from Nancy’s full-length play about the Russian poet Akhmatova and her brief but intense love affair with the British academic Isaiah Berlin after World War II.

As a full-length, two-character play “Anna: Love in the Cold War” had productions in Honolulu and New York.

Dawn Davis runs the Cheatout podcast.

Employees Win Scholarships

Mirabella’s director of human resources Renee Chan announced that the Mirabella’s Foundation has awarded \$50,000 to 32 Mirabella employees. Employees apply to the foundation’s scholarship committee, and the foundation committee as a whole approves the funds. Applicants have never been denied, Chan said.

The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) through its YES Project has also awarded scholarships to Mirabella employees; two recent winners were Cassandra Boddington and Rachel Iatarola.

The OCF supports the community by funding organizations working in a range of fields.

Foundation Broadens Scope of Giving

The resident foundation advisory committee has revised its definition of sustainer to raise year-end funds for the Mirabella Portland Foundation.

In prior years, the foundation recognized as sustainers people who pledged to give \$1,000 or more annually to the foundation’s resident assistance fund.

This year the committee approved changing the definition of sustainer to be “any one person who commits to and contributes not less than \$1,000 to one or more foundation funds annually.”

The committee focuses its fundraising activities on four funds: cultural enrichment, employee hardship, employee scholarship and resident assistance.

RAMP president Jim McGill has said gifts to these funds attest to “the generous nature of Mirabella residents.”



Photo: Stanley Berman

This graffiti-covered base formerly supported the Park South statue of Theodore Roosevelt, toppled by rioters. The Regional Arts and Culture Council recently voted to keep the toppled statues down.

50-Year Water Delivered

Following a Mirabella Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee (MEPS) request, the RAMP council approved the purchase of two pallets of 50-year water. After an informal survey suggested that more than 30% of residents had not stored the recommended amount of water needed to survive after a major earthquake, MEPS recommended using the unspent part of RAMP's 2021 budget to augment Mirabella's supply.

The 200 cases of water are "a step in the right direction," said MEPS chairman Paul Knoll. MEPS meets at 2:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month, either by Zoom or in the Park View Room, depending on Covid.



Photo: Stanley Berman

Rosie Batcheller holds a can of 50-year water ordered by RAMP, at the urging of its emergency preparedness committee, to augment residents' supplies

New Dining Supervisor Chosen

Amitai Schwartz, a familiar face, will be Mirabella's new dining room supervisor. Residents waiting in Aria have watched Amitai fill brown bags and help the servers working with him determine which small container goes into which bag. He has also fielded on-the-spot requests, for ice cream bars or iced tea, and managed telephone calls about missing or inaccurate items.

In short, he's been the go-to guy.

Amitai, who has a B.A. in psychology, appreciates his job at Mirabella because he can work hard while he's here and then focus on his love: music. He has a hard rock, heavy metal band in which he plays guitar but can also play keyboard or drums or even "dabble in brass." Because of Covid his band lacks a vocalist and is looking for one.

Saying that "I've always been pulled in many directions," Amitai says this year he is "evaluating a lot of things." He enjoys putting music together in what he calls "a landscape flattened by Covid."

Amitai will work both in Aria and the Bistro.

Electric Car Sharing on Hold

The September issue of 3550 showed a picture of an electric car, a Chevy Bolt, that was to be available for Mirabella residents to share.

Steven Gibbons, Mirabella transportation coordinator, reports that General Motors has issued a safety recall notice for the car. The planned car share program is on hold until the repairs can be scheduled.

Steven said it may be another month or two before the car is available for resident use.



Photo: Stanley Berman

Amitai Schwartz

C.T.S. student's drawing for the school calendar



Laughter is always on the menu drawing by Leonel
Ethel ♥

Holiday Charities Attack Homelessness

All three charities chosen for Mirabella's holiday drive deal with homelessness, a serious problem in Portland. Community Transitional School, for children experiencing homelessness, had a difficult time during Covid. "Our kids don't have a lot of access to the internet," says Cheryl Bickle, school administrator and third- and fifth-grade teacher.

That made their bus drivers even more important. They would deliver breakfast and assignments to children in the morning, to motels, shelters, camps or vehicles parked on Portland's streets.

Their complicated route is the reason public schools can't always reach these kids.

Drivers made a second trip later in the day to pick up completed assignments and deliver lunch.

CTS students have been back to school since March, with some Covid adjustments. "The school building is alive with the noises of children learning," Bickle says.

Residents can donate through the CTS website: transitionalschool.org or send a check to Community Transitional School, 6601 NE Killingsworth St., Portland, OR 97218.

Covid also made 2020 a challenging year for Mirabella's second charity, Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP), says executive director Laura Golina. Working by phone rather than person-to-person made her realize how important relationships with her clients were. Still, "We continued to provide services remotely," she says, buying disposable phones for clients who could not afford cell phones and spending every cent of federal money that trickled down to them. "We pushed through," Golina says.

NWPP moved 159 households from homelessness to permanent housing, prevented 267 from being evicted and placed 210 in a place more suitable for them. Golino is proud of those statistics.

Residents can donate to NWPP through their website this year to nwpilotproject.org/donate/ or send checks to Northwest Pilot Project, 1430 SW Broadway, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97201.

Do Good Multnomah, which hopes to end veteran homelessness in Oregon, faced the challenge during Covid of creating more distance between its clients, especially in its largest shelter, which housed 110. They broke meals into shifts so people could remain spaced from each other, and provided homemade masks when few were on the market. They moved at-risk people into motels; "The need was bigger than the motels available," says Deputy Director Daniel Hovanas.

Funds budgeted by Portland and Multnomah County supported the program along with "tons of work" and "lots of late nights," says Do Good Multnomah's director Christ Gardner, who prides himself on helping the most vulnerable.

Residents can donate to Do Good Multnomah through their website dogoodmultnomah.org/donate or mail a check to Do Good Multnomah, 7809 SW Broadway, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97201.

Residents who grumble when passing encampments along Portland streets may want to help these charities for people who are struggling against homelessness, in three different areas.

- Nancy Moss

Bond Construction Booming Away

Construction activity on Blocks 41 and 42 of Alamo Manhattan's large apartment development began on schedule at the end of July. The square block on the riverfront will have a 22-story tower surrounded by a four-story podium. A continuation of River Parkway will extend south to separate the easternmost block (41) and the block (42) that reaches to Bond Avenue. A six-story building will be sited on Lot 42. The street has already been graded.

Andersen Construction – the company that is now finishing the Dylan on Moody – will again be Alamo's general contractor.

Alamo will construct a continuation of the Greenway. Both portions of the Greenway, i.e. the entire remaining portion (blocks 41 and 44) will be built-out together. Andersen has already cleared the riverbank—and will soon demolish the wooden structure just offshore—to facilitate that project. The shoreline portion of the project will require some bank stabilization, accomplished by means of a huge underground concrete buttress.

The most obvious manifestation of the new work is the 20-foot-high dirt pile further to the south. This pile consists of soil removed during the excavation of the garage under Block 42 and soil cleared by the grading of the entire site.

Equipment on site and in use includes power augers to drill deep holes where some foundation piles have been placed and cemented in. Pile drivers, the large augers, backhoes, giant forklifts and large racks to store materials are all on site as is a small-scale cement (grout) plant.

Most of the piles being driven are steel tubes. First, the pile drivers ram them down to the most compact and stable strata (not, in this case, bedrock). Then the soil inside the tubes is removed, and a steel reinforcing cage lowered into the tube, followed by wet concrete poured into the cavity. When the concrete hardens, the result is a steel-concrete pile of considerable shear strength (think earthquake) and compression strength (think building weight).

The pile driving is done from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. and, yes, it can be heard by those living on the Mirabella's south side. The Mirabella's South Waterfront committee member Wayne Wiswell explored the city's noise control code and learned that section 18.10.060(A) states, "This standard [maximum sound levels for equipment in construction activities] shall not apply to ... pile drivers...". And your reporter has discovered that no muffling or sound-absorption devices or techniques have proven both safe and effective for diminishing on-land pile-driving noise.

A network of good-size white pipes extracts water from the high-water table and transfers it to the treatment plant for cleaning before it is sent to the river. The green treatment tanks sit in the northeast corner of Block 41.

We will follow the build-out with future 3550 articles. Everyone can do their own sidewalk superintending as this project grows before our eyes.

- Pete Swan

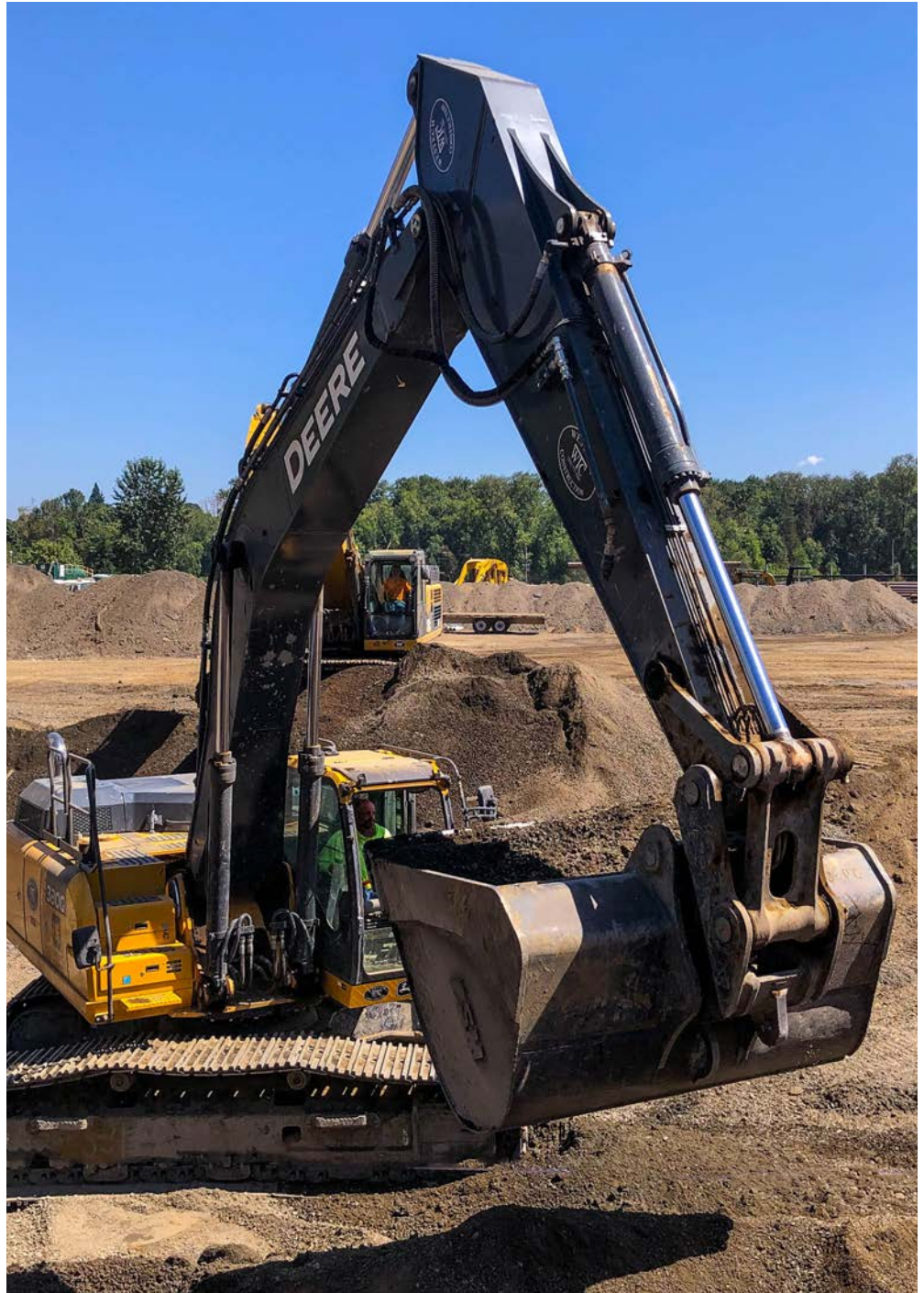


Photo: Stanley Berman

Staffing Woes Linger

By NANCY MOSS

The brown paper bags, residents' names printed in large letters on the bottom, stand in a row on two long tables. Behind them servers bustle with take-out boxes, putting them into open bags. At one side of the tables a resident explains to the manager that his bag contained the wrong sort of juice.

Aria East's temporary closure, along with the Bistro's remodeling, has made the above a nightly scene for residents. Mirabella, along with other CCRCs and restaurants, has faced challenges in hiring servers, as well as other employees.

Director of Human Resources Renee Chan says this is largely due to Covid. Concerned about their school-age children, women have not yet returned to the marketplace, she says. "Take the women out, that's a problem."

In addition, workers have become used to working at home and may be slow to take jobs requiring their presence. The hybrid scheme adopted by many, working in the office one or two days and at home for the rest, appeals to some workers.

Another problem can be the millennials, people born between 1980 and 1995. Two experienced servers told 3550 that if these people don't enjoy a job, instead of giving two weeks' notice they just don't show up the next day. "They won't get a reference, but they don't care," one server noted. And they don't shine their shoes for interviews, the other added.

Renee agrees that this is the case. Millennials "have a different outlook," she says, calling them the "I want it now" generation. In an employees' market like the current one, if they don't get satisfaction now, right away, they just quit.

Asked if employees had complaints about residents, Renee says "only a handful."

In her staffing town hall in late September, Mirabella's executive director Sharon McCartney said, "recruiting has changed." Pacific Retirement Services (PRS), Mirabella's parent company, revamped its recruiting program nine months ago to meet hiring challenges

It now focuses on social media, especially Facebook, and has assem-

bled a short video that shows hands assembling a piece of pie topped with whipped cream and curls of chocolate and setting an elegant table. 3550 founding editor Steve Casey mentions the bond between some employees and residents; resident Rosie Hole tells viewers, "We're a family."

Employees often apply through social media platforms now, Sharon says. The process has evolved.

Recruiters for Mirabella emphasize its scholarship program and fitness center, its benefits such as a public transport pass and flexibility in scheduling, so important to employees taking classes. Employees can get a full meal for lunch or dinner for only two dollars.

Exit questionnaires of departing employees reveal, Sharon says, that the main cause for their leaving is failure to feel "connected to their community." They do not have "tenure ties," do not feel they have a friend at work.

Trying to distinguish between what we can and cannot control, Sharon has been exploring what should change. She mentions two servers, possibly millennials, who left after one shift, saying a resident had mistreated them.

"Complaints about resident behavior" is one reason employees leave, Sharon said. A small number of residents, she maintains, may not realize they have offended. Ninety percent of them are contrite, willing to apologize to the employee involved.

Sometimes the resident is cognitively impaired and needs to be moved to assisted living or memory care, Sharon added. People slipping into dementia can lose their sense of boundaries.

Science writer Marta Zaraska described in Discover magazine a Scottish study which followed people after the age of 81 and found that their "extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness" declined significantly as they aged.

Still, the resident who found that four of the five items in her to-go bag were wrong, chuckled. "I think it's a record," she said. On the few August afternoons where new servers were filling the dinner brown bags and residents had to wait half an hour for their dinner, an air of good-natured acceptance filled the room. People there seemed to grasp that this was part



Photo: Stanley Berman

A server prepares to-go bags in Aria.

of living through a difficult time.

Residents have demonstrated their support for employees in a number of ways. The Mirabella Foundation maintains both an employee hardship fund and an employee scholarship fund.

In addition RAMP treasurer E.J. Finneran tells us that 75% of residents contributed to the employee assistance fund last year, giving workers a healthy – and deserved – bonus in time for the holiday season.

What about that missing 25%, one wonders. Do they stiff waiters in restaurants? Hurry off before that missing tip is noticed? They are taking advantage of anonymity to coast on the generosity of residents who donate.



"The closest we get to an intimate dining experience is ordering delivery together."

"Kindness goes a long way," Renee Chan said during a coffee social. What Steve Casey and Rosie Hole said in the PRS video about how a relationship akin to family can evolve between residents and staff was not a fabrication. It can happen.

Still, the issue raised by Sharon during the town hall has to be addressed. Sharon said during the town hall that 82% of employees' exit interviews, compromising 12-15%, mentioned treatment by residents as a reason for leaving. She has had "conversations" with six residents mentioned by name. Residents observing unreasonable treatment of staff by another resident can either talk to the employee's manager, email Sharon about the incident or leave a message on Sharon's voicemail.

Residents attending the coffee social and town hall suggested giving out employee appreciation checks twice during the year, providing a short-term benefit to employees who consider quitting during the early months and putting a rose or other symbol on employees' name tags to indicate a new hire, who might require special understanding. Management is considering the second option; the first would be up to residents, who control the employee appreciation fund.

During the September meeting of RAMP's dining committee, PRS Corporate Director of Culinary Services Todd Albert called Mirabella's situation a "perfect storm," with Covid restrictions, the closing of the Bistro for remodeling and the limiting and closing of Aria due to staffing problems. For the foreseeable future residents will have to dig deep into their store of patience and cope with wrong or incomplete orders, the trek to the 24th floor to ensure correction is made, the rejection of a reservation made at 7 a.m. the previous day.

As Director of Marketing Renee Hix said during the coffee social, echoing Renee Chan, "A little kindness goes a long way."

Cultural Assessment Perks Along

By NANCY MOSS

In 2020, fueled in part by the energy of Black Lives Matter protests, Mirabella's executive director, Sharon McCartney, hired consultant Dianne Dawson Daniels to examine a possible "lack of respect" shown by some residents to staff or by staff to other staff members. Daniels would conduct a series of interviews to "take the temperature" of Mirabella, Sharon said.

An associate professor at Loyola University Chicago, Daniels holds a doctorate in business administration from Nova Southeastern University and is the principal of 4D Advising in Flossmoor, Ill.

Daniels has met on Zoom with five Mirabella groups: directors, managers, RAMP leaders, health services and front-of-house dining staff. Directors include people like Brian Wycoff, director of facility services, and Megan Huston, director of resident services.

Managers include Mayra Guzman, assistant dining room manager and Steven Gibbons, transportation coordinator.

Daniels was looking for "stakeholders," resident leaders rather than foot soldiers. No RAMP committee members or chairs, no residents who live quietly and don't join committees. Staff sessions also focused on people in the top jobs.

After the Zoom sessions, Daniels will make a written assessment; she and Sharon will then decide what areas to focus on and put together a task force to determine the next steps to take to improve relationships. "We don't know what we have to tackle," Sharon said. The process will unfold organically, she believes.

In a town hall meeting, Sharon stressed that a small number of residents say things that are hurtful to employees. She told 3550 that residents have used words like "idiot" and "incompetent" in the past.

A veteran server told 3550 that 95% of residents were "fine," easy to deal with. That gives us an A – but 5% of 300-plus residents means a number of people who are quick to carp and complain.

LGBTQ issues and cursing are two staff-to-staff issues Sharon mentioned.

Following a strong 3550 article on the use of Mirabella Portland Foundation funds to pay for the \$16,500 requested for the project, funding for Daniels' study was moved to a PRS management account.

One challenge for the program is demonstrating that it has worked, that it has improved resident and staff behavior in a measurable way. The high turnover among servers means that new workers will be coming in and ones who went through Daniels' session will be leaving Mirabella. Making the imprint of the program lasting will be a marker of its success.

Sharon wants results of this process to be sustainable; the challenge will be to achieve that goal.



Dianne Dawson Daniels

Fire Safety Plans in Limbo

By ED PARKER

Do you know what to do when the fire alarm rings? Do you know enough to ignore the recorded instructions announcement that plays automatically after the alarm rings?

Do you remember the last time Mirabella had a fire drill? Has anyone given you fire safety instructions that you understood and remembered?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you are not alone.

Consider this: sheltering in place in your apartment may be the safest option of all.

Should you expect to get all-clear fire safety instructions from Mirabella management sometime soon?

Don't hold your breath.

Mirabella Portland fire safety plans have been in limbo for years and are unlikely to be clarified soon.

What Happens Now?

Whenever the fire alarm is set off automatically by a fire, intentionally for a planned fire drill or as an accidental false alarm, a recorded announcement tells you to evacuate the building without using the elevators.

Many observers, including at least one fire marshal who inspected the building but did not want to be publicly quoted, think that advice is inappropriate for our building and its occupants.

After a false alarm earlier this year, several residents followed the recorded instructions and walked down a stairwell for multiple floors. One frail resident had to be transported by ambulance to a hospital emergency room for treatment. The resident later returned safely but could have avoided the risk by sheltering in place.

After an alarm event, false or real, a staff person usually sends an all-clear message to the whole building, even if the alarm rings in only one part of the building. That policy was adopted because the alarm sound often carries to other floors. Members of the Mirabella emergency preparedness subcommittee (MEPS) recently suggested that the all-clear message, heard by people who didn't hear the alarm, is confusing. They suggested it include a reference to where the original alarm was and how it was resolved.

Three Floors Down or Shelter in Place?

Several years ago Mirabella held fire drills in which residents used the stairwells to go down three floors to shelter in the corridor on that lower floor. If going three floors down took you to the third-floor assisted living

section in the terrace or the second-floor health center in either tower or terrace, then you should continue to the ground floor lobby.

Residents also had the option of sheltering in place in their apartments if their mobility was limited or if the back of their entry door was hot. Residents were reminded to use the back of their hand, not the palm, to test the heat of the door.

Shelter-in-place instructions included putting a damp towel on the floor at the bottom of the entry door, putting a sign in a window or on the balcony and, in a real fire but not a drill, calling 911 to make sure responders knew you were sheltering in place.

When a real fire happens, the automatic alarm does not ring throughout the whole building. It rings on the floor on which the fire occurs, the floor above and the floor below. The sound may be heard more faintly on other floors.

Thus, going down three floors from a floor on which the alarm is ringing guarantees getting to a safe floor. Having residents on all alarmed floors go down three flights keeps too many people from crowding onto the same floor.

What's the Risk in This Building?

After Mirabella opened, the building's architects, structural engineers and construction management made a presentation to residents about building safety.

In the years since, various state and local fire marshals have expressed opinions after completing building inspections. Experience from actual fires has added to our knowledge.

The following is a summary of the accumulated understandings, as recalled by Mirabella residents.

Past fires in the building have been contained in the apartments where they started because inter-apartment fire walls and the fire door that connects the apartment to the public corridor prevent the fire from spreading outside the apartment, while automatic sprinklers reduce the fire danger inside. Fire department responders have always arrived in time to contain and control the fire before it spread outside the apartment.

Horizontal spread on a floor would be even less likely if doors and windows are kept closed to reduce the oxygen available for a fire to spread.

Building architects reported that thick concrete between floors should keep an uncontrolled fire on one floor from spreading to another for at least two hours. The direction of spread would almost certainly be upward.

Typical fire department response times are in minutes, not hours.

Fire department responders do not want any residents to stay in the apartment in which the fire occurs or in the lobby on that floor. They also do not want any residents in the elevators they block off for their use. If evacuation to another floor is necessary for residents with limited mobility, other elevators or the emergency Stryker chairs located in a stairwell on every third floor could be used, with assistance from Mirabella staff or emergency responders.

What Do Regulations Require?

Regulatory compliance and bureaucratic process have dominated discussion to date.

Fire regulations are different for independent-living residents than for skilled nursing, memory care or assisted-living residents. Fire drills are held regularly on the health-care floor to comply with regulations. Residents of that floor practice lateral evacuation on the same floor.

No regulation requires fire drills for independent living residents. However, Mirabella's executive director, Sharon McCartney, has asked MEPS to



"I'm more of an idea fireman."

resume independent-living fire drills.

MEPS chair Paul Knoll told Sharon that the emergency preparedness team was reluctant to conduct drills with instructions different from the official automated announcement without getting a memo from Sharon authorizing them to deviate from the official instruction approved by the City of Portland.

Sharon declined to provide such a memo for understandable regulatory compliance and legal liability reasons.

Both the administration and MEPS agreed that a better solution would be to change the recorded announcement. Sharon instructed facilities director Brian Wycoff to try to apply to the city for permission to change the announcement.

While he was working the process bottom-up, Sharon attempted to get some city council attention in a concurrent top-down process.

Neither approach has yielded success yet. Brian reported at the Oct. 6 buildings and grounds committee meeting that the city might approve some variation of a three floors down announcement without mention of the shelter-in-place option.

Sharon told 3550, "This is a topic I am very passionate about and disheartened by our current status. I truly wish we could go back to conducting drills, despite the alarm."

Paul Knoll expressed willingness "on behalf of the MEPS group to continue working with administration to reach a solution that serves everyone's best interests."

Sheltering in place in your apartment may be the safest option of all.

Some complicated and potentially expensive details may cause further delays. For example, on the terrace side of the building residents of all independent-living floors would have to evacuate to the ground floor to avoid assisted-living and health-care floors.

Brian reported that it would be expensive and take much longer to add a separate emergency alarm and announcement system for the terrace side of the building instead of using the current system to give the same message to everyone.

Even with a single message for the whole building, working out all the details will take time.

What About Elevator Use?

Some national experts who participate in the development of national fire-safety standards for high-rise buildings with multiple elevators are now recommending that not all elevators need be blocked off for fire department use. One or more could be used for resident evacuation. Regulations permitting that are likely a step too far for the Portland fire bureaucracy.

Using stairwells to evacuate people with limited mobility from at-risk floors of a high-rise building may create more risk than it avoids. For now, elevator use is forbidden. But no enforcement procedure prevents residents from using elevators that the fire department has not blocked off for their use.

What's the Safest Fire Response in Our Building?

Instead of debating bureaucratic regulations, perhaps residents should ask the question: What is the safest way to minimize risk in a building of our type with our population of residents?

The facilities page on Miranet has a tab labeled "emergency" with a document answering frequently asked questions about high-rise building evacuation. The recommendation is to use a stairwell to evacuate the building if you have sufficient mobility to safely do so. The document says that acceptable alternatives are to stay in place or to descend to a designated level below the fire floor.

If there is a fire alarm on your floor and you have any concerns about it, going down three floors should help you stay safe. If there is an alarm ringing on the destination floor you should go down further. If you get down as far as the second floor or the third floor on the terrace side, you should continue down to the ground floor.

Bottom Line

Sheltering in place in your apartment with the entry door kept closed, but unlocked, is probably a safe response, unless the fire is in your apartment. That is especially true for people with mobility issues, even though officials hesitate to give that advice because of legal liability.

Don't expect a different set of regulations, a change in recorded instructions or an official memo authorizing residents to ignore the recorded instructions any time soon. Residents should decide for themselves how best to stay safe.





Photo: Robert French

Sue and Paul Knoll

Sue and Paul Knoll lived across the street from each other in Oregon City when Paul was 9. "We basically ignored each other," Paul says of their freshman year when he was busy with football, basketball and track and Sue with music.

"Paul and I lived in different worlds," Sue says of their high school years at Oregon City High School. By their sophomore year in college, however, they had found each other and began dating.

Sue's interest in music started early. At 4 ½, she began studying violin with Boris Sirpo, a prominent stringed-instrument teacher and orchestra conductor whom the composer and violinist Jean Sibelius described as having "a gift for discovering young talented violinists and teaching them."

Paul and Sue both chose to attend Lewis and Clark College, Paul because it was the only college to meet all the requirements of his various scholarships. Sue wanted to major in music and continue studying with Boris Sirpo, who was on the faculty there. Sue became a member of Sirpo's newly formed Little Chamber Orchestra, composed of 16 young women. At age 17 and 19, she was a violin soloist on two concert tours when the orchestra played for members of the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., and all over Europe.

Resident Profile: Paul and Sue Knoll Talent and Dedication

By PRISCILLA COWELL

"When I realized how few women were playing in orchestras in the '60s," said Sue, "I dropped my music major and got an education degree."

Loyal Oregonians, "in our junior year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of Oregon's statehood on Feb. 14 by deciding to get married," says Paul with a smile. They married after graduating.

Paul changed his major every year: English literature, philosophy, astronomy and foreign languages (German and New Testament Greek). "With a degree but no major, I decided to pursue graduate work in medieval history, my favorite subject in Civics and Humanities, the year-long required freshman course that was my only undergraduate history class."

He chose University of Colorado at Boulder because of its close student-mentor relationship. Professor Thompson, a specialist in medieval east central Europe, was researching medieval Polish history and about to retire in four years. He told Paul that if he could complete his Ph.D. in four years, he would be Paul's mentor. So without any Polish background, language or ties, Paul decided to become a specialist in Polish medieval history. Sue, meanwhile, taught fourth-graders, whose age she loved.

Paul completed his Ph.D. in four years and accepted a teaching position at Purdue in Indiana.

As firmly rooted Westerners, they were not at all sure they would like the Midwest. "We shared each other's stereotypes of Midwesterners as narrow, provincial, not sophisticated. We were dead wrong," Paul remembers. "They were warm, learned and engaged, all the things we liked and valued." Sue agrees: "Although Purdue was an agriculture and engineering university, the faculty appreciated art and music. We came to love living in the Midwest."

Paul spent five years teaching Western Civ, as all beginning history professors did, as well as upper division courses on medieval history. But he missed teaching graduate courses. In 1969 the University of Southern California offered him the chance to teach upper and lower division and graduate courses.

The family, now including a daughter and a son, moved from a town of about 60,000 to a greater Los Angeles area of about two million.

"One big difference," Sue remembers, "was that the faculty lived over a very large geographical area. One night we drove over 100 miles to attend two cocktail parties, from a beach town to the valley."

They were delighted to find a very rich cultural life, with high-quality music, museums, plays and cinema. After a long search they bought a house in Culver City, where they made friends in the movie industry.

Finding that USC's history department was not in the top 100 history departments in the country, Paul set out to improve the quality of the students and the faculty. Balancing teaching, research and service to the university, he served three terms as head of the history department, chaired more than 20 college and university committees, was given every teaching award offered, and became a recognized scholar in medieval history of east central European studies.

To improve teaching in the university, Paul established the Center for Excellence in Teaching, staffed by six rotating faculty members each year. They taught graduate students the practical aspects of dealing with a class: how to lecture, engage in discussion groups, prepare syllabuses and organize and structure semester-long classes.

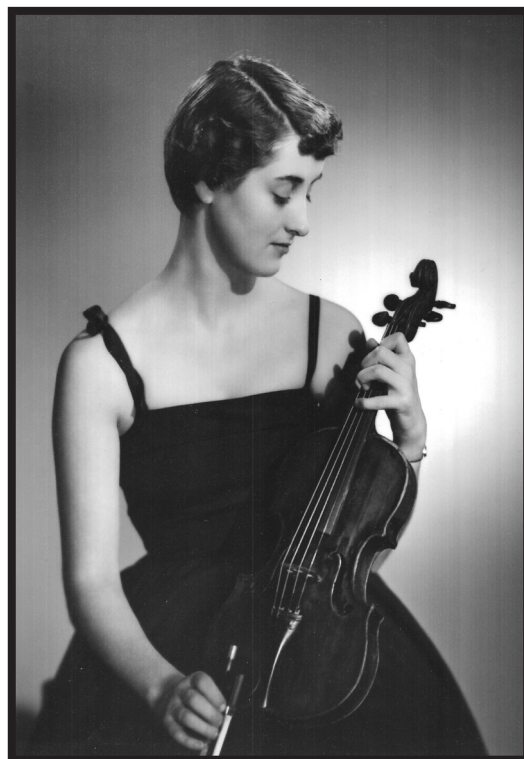
Paul remembers with pride, "Gradually USC's reputation for teaching rose and we became more selective. The bottom quartile of students was no longer admitted, so we had fewer students. By 2010 we were more selective than UCLA and Berkeley and could attract big-name faculty."

Sue expanded her teaching experience to the field of gifted students at the elementary school level where she organized and taught year-long classes in music, science and other subjects the students would not otherwise have. In her favorite project she divided the class into two teams, each to create its own society and artifacts that would help define it. The artifacts were hidden; teams had to find them and use them to interpret the newly discovered civilization.

In addition to teaching, Paul continued to do research and writing. In all, he estimates he published 45 articles, 150 scholarly reviews of scholarly books and many brief scholarly reviews for Choice magazine, which is used by librarians seeking worthwhile titles for their collections.

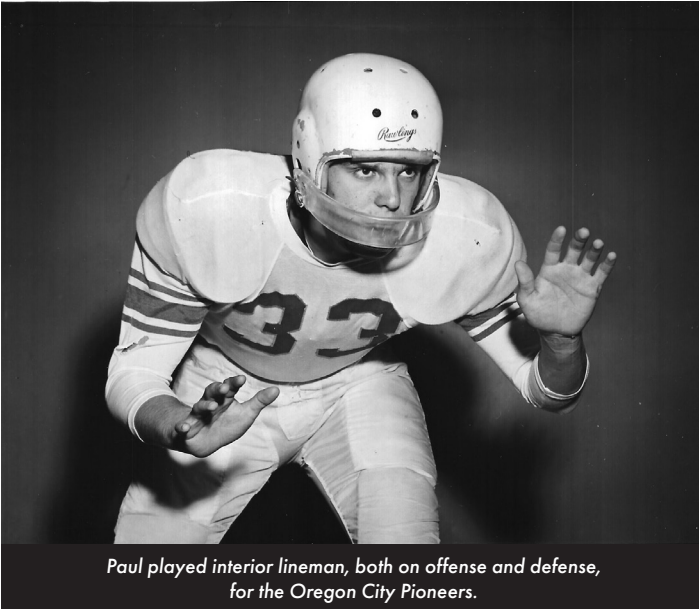
He also authored and co-authored scholarly books in his field. He began his most recent single-author book, "A Pearl of Powerful Learning: The University of Crakow in the 15th Century" after retirement, finished it at Mirabella and in 2015 sent it to Netherlands' Brill Press, the oldest continuous publisher of scholarly work in Europe. (December, 2016 3550 interviewed Paul about the book)

(Continued on next page)



Sue's photograph was used by newspapers to publicize upcoming concerts.

(Continued from previous page)



Paul played interior lineman, both on offense and defense, for the Oregon City Pioneers.

Returning from Paul's sabbatical year and a break from her teaching, Sue got an offer through a friend to work in finance. Rather to her surprise Sue found that musical and mathematical abilities can go together. She became chief financial officer of two businesses in a 20-year career.

In 2010 Paul retired after 40 years at USC and, without ever seeing their new Mirabella apartment, the couple moved to Portland, where their children lived. "We both enjoy Mirabella and its great group of residents," Sue said.

The Knolls' apartment displays posters, art, books and artifacts from Paul's long and distinguished career. Sue points out her own special memento, a pair of lovely Danish modern armchairs in their living room. "Those were my reward for spending two summers with very young children in Communist Poland with Paul," she explains with a grin.

After retirement and moving to Mirabella, Paul and Sue traveled to New York where Paul received a distinguished achievement award from the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America. (See the September 2014 3550)

Working on committees with dedication tempered by humor, the Knolls have contributed much to Mirabella life.

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Brown Bagging It

By PAMELA LINDHOLM-LEVY

If picking up meals in brown paper bags, as Mirabella residents have, might be called a tart, say lemony, situation, the bags' second life can without a doubt be seen as making lemonade. As metaphorical lemonade, these brown bags have filled a need at Outreach Food Ministries, a social service of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. Its food ministry provides healthy food six days a week to a group of 50 to 60 regulars, street people mostly, who use Mirabella's brown bags to take the food away.

Two Mirabella residents who are members of Trinity's congregation made this recycle, re-use idea a reality. Dee Poth saw brown bags piling up in her apartment day by day. Indeed, bags were piling up for everyone, ending up in the blue recycling bins or in the trash. Dee knew that resident Charyl Cathey was co-chair of Outreach Food Ministries and that food given out by the program needed to be carried away in—light bulb moment—paper bags.

Charyl agreed Outreach Food Ministries would be delighted to take them. Dee approached Mirabella administration about a collection scheme. Bags would be dropped off near the valet office or at several residents' doorways. The doorway plan was eventually scrapped and collection moved to the trash room on each floor, with a volunteer monitor on each floor (the request for those volunteers was filled rapidly).

Floor volunteers take the bags to valet, whose staff organizes and loads them into Charyl's car. She and her husband, Joe Ceniceros, take them to Trinity once a week.

Charyl, a former middle school principal, found in Outreach Food Ministries the perfect match for her desire to continue community service after retirement. Another Mirabella resident, Priscilla Cowell, helped keep the food distribution project afloat during the 2008 economic downturn.

For 30 years, Outreach Food Ministries, an emergency food center, has been an important part of Trinity's contribution to a larger community. Each recipient can count daily on a variety of fresh food to provide about 2000 calories. On Wednesdays, a special boxed meal holds a complete dinner. Prior to Covid, the Wednesday noon meal brought 200 to 300 people into the church to be served a sit-down meal on real plates and with real silverware. Besides food, this weekly event encouraged the warmth of

community and companionship to people who were often isolated.

Volunteers served the food and got to know a number of the diners through repeat visits. Some of the volunteers had careers interacting with healing, or helping people like the ones needing food assistance and so much more. Consequently, over time relationships formed with volunteers who understood needs beyond the food-related.

However, no special background or talent is required of Outreach Food Ministry volunteers, nor do they need to be members of the church. Out of a total of 30 to 40 volunteers, on any given night some will dispense food and others will work in the kitchen, six at a time in the small space. The only paid position is kitchen manager.

Before Covid, volunteers tended to be older retirees, but they became wary of being out among people. During Covid restrictions, volunteers were younger people, a number of whom weren't working. In later summer and into this fall, some older volunteers began returning.

Where does the food come from? Some volunteers are gleaners, collecting food made available by, among others, Trader Joe's, New Seasons Markets, Elephants Deli, Baker and Spice bakery, Pizza Schmizza and the Oregon Food Bank. A restaurant may call to offer extra food. Restaurants closed or pared their menus because of Covid restrictions and had food on hand they couldn't keep. The Trinity kitchen installed a walk-in freezer and walk-in refrigerator to make space for what might once again be termed lemonade from someone else's lemons.

About one-third of the distributed food is donated with the remainder purchased with funds from the church or direct donations from parishioners as well as non-parishioners who understand the need to support hungry people. Outreach Food Ministries is open six days a week while many food pantries limit visits and require registration.

Mirabella brown bags are also used at the food pantry at William Temple House, Trinity's close neighbor in Portland's alphabet district and collaborator with Outreach Food Ministries. William Temple House offers services beyond food: a thrift store, mental health and family counseling and children's clothes.

Books culled from the shelves of Mirabella's library or duplicate donations most often go to William Temple thrift store. Library committee member Sylvia McGill and her spouse, Jim, take them to the thrift store in what else—brown paper bags. The thrift store will readily take books and other items from individual donors. Consult the website for details.

Besides William Temple House, the Trinity Outreach has partners such as Transition Projects, a transitional housing facility. Trinity volunteers provide dinner for its clients three times per month. Another partner is Lift Urban Portland, which through its Adopt-a Hi-Rise offers services to low income residents of high-rise buildings.

Humble brown paper bags fill a need. They exist here to be filled with food and there - thanks to light-bulb moments and connections made within Mirabella - to help feed hungry people.



A Trinity volunteer stands next to a table covered with brown paper bags.

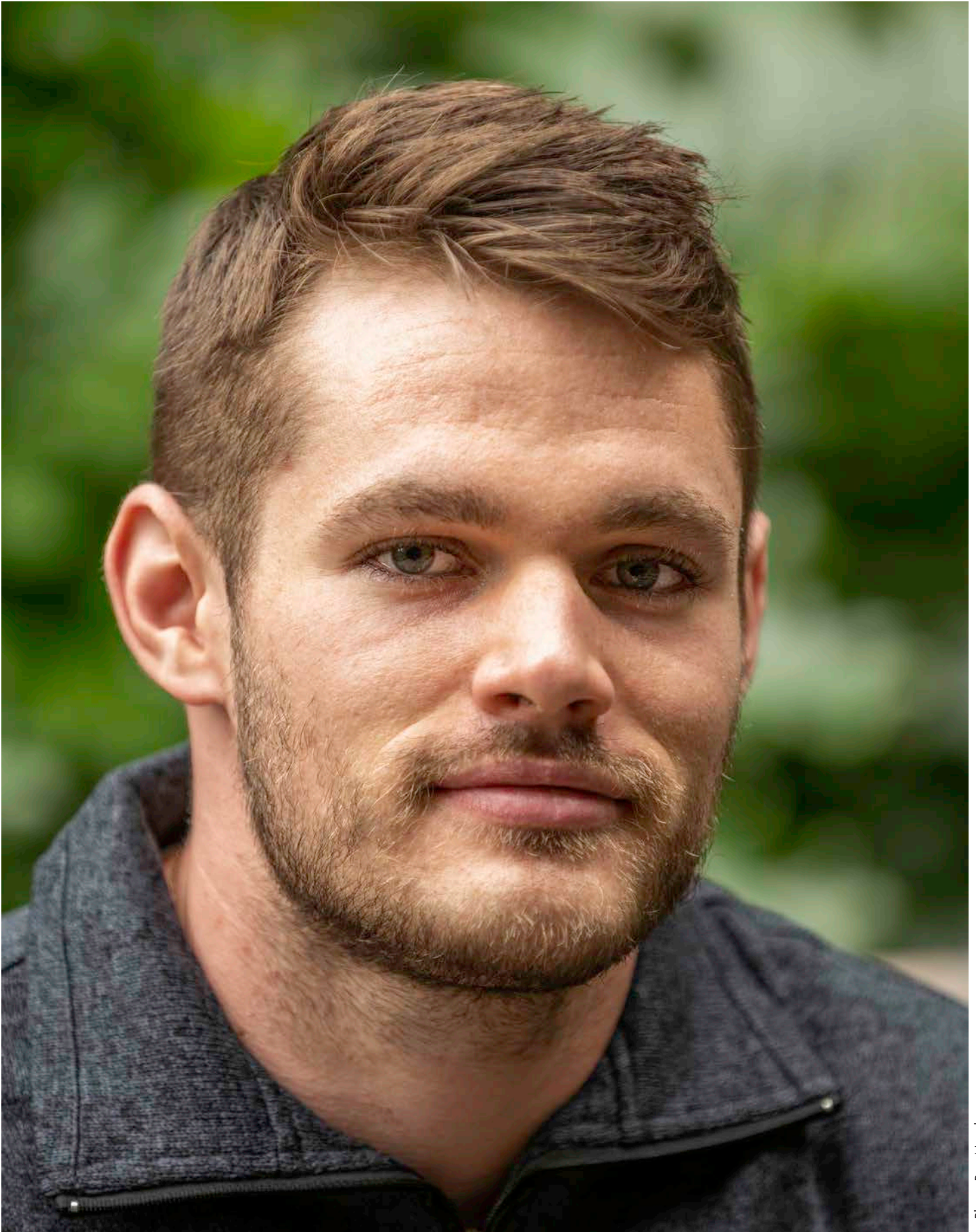


Photo: Ron Mendonca

Steven Gibbons

It's not that he particularly loves cars. It's not that being a young Uber and Lyft driver was a career goal. It's just that when Steven Gibbons' friend Eddie told him there was a job available in the valet department at Mirabella Portland, it sounded like a better deal than driving people home from bars on Saturday night.

So a bit more than five years ago, Steven began working in transportation services. Because of age restrictions on insurance, he couldn't do the transport part, which is to drive residents to appointments or the airport. But that was OK with him. Retrieving and re-racking cars for residents and visitors also came with potential scholarship awards. To him that was a most attractive perk.

Staff Profile:

Steven Gibbons

The Car Guy

By PAMELA LINDHOLM-LEVY

When Steven turned 25, he became a driver as well as a valet, and in July of 2020 he was promoted to transportation coordinator. "Overall it's been a great experience," he says but adds with a laugh that now and then he does miss being able to say, "I'm not sure. You'll have to talk to Rick." Rick Thompson, who held the job Steven has now, was promoted to assistant director of facility services.

Seeing that paths to advancement exist in Mirabella, Steven enrolled in LeadingAge Oregon Leadership Academy, a 10-month program that teaches business and management, followed by classes Steven took at Portland Community College. Currently, Academy classes meet online instead of at its home base in Hood River.

Transportation is more than car handling. Vans to take groups shopping or to theater and music events must be available and scheduled, with enough drivers on staff. Steven must be sure there are valets on duty from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. everyday.

Steven's more into bikes. He got a new one just before Covid hit. He enjoys group rides with friends. Growing up in Bend after moving from New Jersey with his family when he was 4 years old, he rode his mountain bike on trails that have since been obliterated by housing. The path through woods where he walked on the way home from school, gone.

He was never the outdoors enthusiast one might expect from central Oregon. Snowboarding interested him for awhile, but best buddies weren't into it and it's no fun to go alone. Buddies frequented a place where you could play video games and pool and get tattoos.

At first, Steven got free tattoos instead of payouts from winning video games. Some of the images aren't particularly meaningful to him, especially ones on his lower arms: flowers, a shark and a deep-sea diver. Later ones are favorite characters from movies of his younger years: three Star Wars storm troopers on his calf, and on an ankle a facehugger from the "Alien" movies. Also on a leg are tattoos of his new dog and his old dog.

When Steven was a kid, his family took in a stray 6 - to 7-month-old dog, and Steven remembers, "The first week she was at our house she wouldn't come in and decided to live under a bush in the backyard." His mother didn't want to keep her, but no one claimed her. The family

named her Chinook and had her for 14 years. Steven describes her as having the size and coloring of a coyote in a fluffy Husky body.

New dog Liliith, age 3, is a black lab/border collie, black with a white tummy and paws. Some days she goes to doggy daycare. Other days she stays home and a person from Wag! stops by to take her for a walk.

Home is the house Steven bought this past summer. He and his girlfriend painted the interior, but otherwise it hasn't needed much work. His only other DIY project was turning one of the bedrooms into a home gym. He's had a fence built.

In high school in Bend he played trombone in band class. Actually, he tried not to. This class, or choir or orchestra was required. There were five students in the band's trombone section. So Steven figured if he looked like he was playing but didn't make a sound, no one would notice. Or at least the band leader wouldn't. During one number the player on one side of Steven, fifth chair to his fourth chair, didn't play a correct note. The band leader came down the row asking each player to play the note, and the first three did, perfectly. But Steven, fourth, who hadn't played it, had a hard time playing it, and the leader made him do it over and over until he got it right. At least he did have some facility with the instrument. The leader didn't even ask the fifth chair player, who had made the mistake, to play at all. Afterwards, the fifth chair whispered to Steven, "Sorry." She knew. He doesn't play an instrument now, but goes to clubs and shows as well as music festivals to hear punk and metal bands.

At age 17, he talked his mother into letting him go on an adventure trip to New Zealand. He said the only culture shock was that some of the other boys from around the U.S. were from wealthy families and had trips like this all the time. Most of the activities seemed to have been designed to terrify or test the nerve of the boys.

In a week and a half of being constantly on the move, he found sky-diving cool with an experienced partner, floating right over terrain that had been featured in the "Lord of the Rings" films. Another challenge involved a cave, water, waterfalls, an inner tube and a cave ceiling that looked to be covered with glowing worms. Imagine rolling downhill in a ball that was in a larger ball. In Auckland they crewed on a sleek racing yacht that took them out into the ocean. On the same side, they visited a Maori village restoration and learned about that people's culture, life and history.

Steven's mother wondered whether he'd be a zoologist or marine biologist because of specimens he liked to buy and collect, and after finding a dead sea lion on a fifth-grade trip to the coast. His sand sculpture group created a monument to its memory. But no. Wherever he's headed now, be it on a bike or in a car, he's going places.



Steven's dogs Chinook and Liliith

Every Breath You Take*

By RITA BRICKMAN EFFROS

Most of us assume that breathing is a passive, automatic action. We breathe and live; we stop breathing and die. We enter the world as newborns by inhaling and leave it by exhaling. In many languages the word “exhale” is synonymous with “dying”.

It is often thought that whether you breathe 20 times a minute, 10 times a minute, through the mouth, nose, even via a breathing tube, it's all the same. It turns out that this is far from the truth. In fact, the efficiency of our breathing has a direct effect on health and even on life itself.

The Framingham Heart Study followed a cohort of 5,209 men and women for more than 20 years. Each person was evaluated for the amount of air forcibly exhaled from the lungs after taking the deepest breath possible. This exhalation volume was a strong predictor of cardiovascular-related disease and death.

A second, more-recent study at the University of Buffalo followed 1,195 men and women for 29 years. This study showed that lung function was a significant predictor not only of heart disease, but of all-cause mortality.

Most of us are familiar with the term pacemaker. We know that it's in the heart and controls the rhythm of our heartbeats. But we actually have a second pacemaker; this one controls our breathing. Unlike the one in the heart, the breathing pacemaker is located far from the organ it controls—it is found in the brain.

The first signal to the brain pacemaker occurs immediately after birth. When a baby is born, it is wet and cold. Amazingly, the cold skin sends a signal to the baby's breathing center in the brain where the millions of pacemaker neurons start the process of breathing.

The breathing pacemaker's location in the brain allowed breath to be more than a mechanical function. Breathing begins to be integrated into the emotional and anxiety centers of the brain.

The other key difference between the two pacemakers is that you can consciously control the breathing pacemaker. You can hold your breath, at least for a certain period of time, and you can change the output of the breathing pace. Thus, you can actually override and alter the breathing pacemaker.

Breathing, a natural function of human beings, can be negatively influenced by many factors, such as stress, sedentary lifestyle, eating processed foods and even excessive talking. Moreover, the way that we breathe, i.e., via mouth or nose, can affect our health. It turns out that nose and mouth breathing are quite different.

The human nose evolved to function in breathing and smelling, the mouth for eating and speaking. Yet, it has been estimated that almost half of modern adults breathe through the mouth, especially during early morning hours.

Several studies have documented adverse effects of mouth breathing. Greater incidence of sleep apnea, introduction of poorly humidified air into the lungs and even bad breath are associated with mouth breathing.

The nose is greatly underappreciated, according to Dr. Jayakar Nayak, chief of rhinology research at Stanford University. In fact, the National Institutes of Health consists of 27 different divisions—devoted to studies on lungs, eyes, skin, ears, etc.—but none is dedicated to research on the nose.

Besides being involved in the sense of smell, the nose is crucial to our health, since it clears air, heats it, and moistens it for easier absorption. But the nose has much more complicated functions, such as triggering productions of certain hormones and chemicals that can affect blood pressure,

digestion, heart rate, dilation of certain blood vessels and even memory storage.

Most surprising is the fact that the right and left nostrils function independently. When we breathe through the right nostril, we activate systems associated with fight or flight, putting us in a state of alertness and readiness.

The left nostril affects functions related more to rest-and-relaxation, and to the reduction of anxiety. In fact, some yoga practices train users in alternate nostril breathing to modulate body functions.

The mucosal surfaces within the nose are also affected by circadian rhythm. It has been shown that nasal secretions, such as certain antibodies and other blood proteins, vary according to the time of day they are collected. These circadian cycles also differ between the right and left nostrils.

The interior of the nose is blanketed with the same type of tissue that covers the penis, clitoris and nipples. In fact, for some people, the mere thought of sex causes severe “nasal erections” and bouts of sneezing, a situation called “honeymoon rhinitis”.

Nose breathing is believed to be more beneficial to our health than mouth breathing. One of the positive effects is mediated through the release by the nasal sinuses of a molecule known as nitric oxide.

This chemical plays an essential role in delivering oxygen to cells, due to the increase in blood circulation. Nitric oxide influences such diverse factors as immunity, weight, mood and sexual function. Indeed, the drug Viagra works by releasing nitric oxide into the bloodstream, which opens genital capillaries.

The central role of breathing in our physical and mental well-being means that, like the rest of our body, our lungs require daily care and attention. One strategy that can improve breathing quality and efficiency involves training in so-called diaphragmatic breathing.

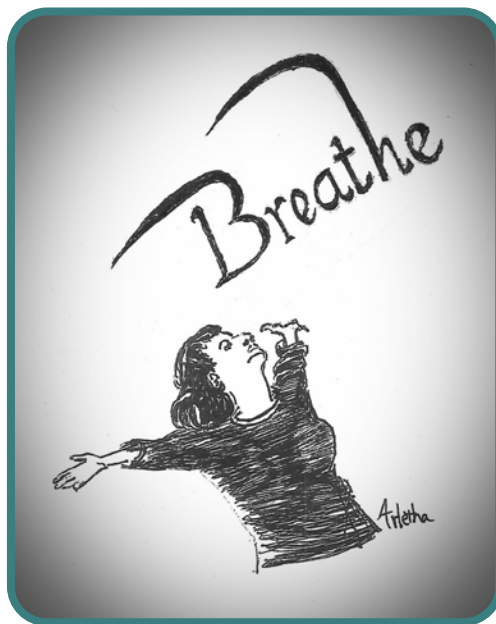
Diaphragmatic breathing uses awareness of the diaphragm muscle, which separates our abdominal organs from our lungs. Taking deep breaths by consciously expanding the belly and ribs, then exhaling as completely as possible, helps the lungs reach their full capacity. This type of breathing has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression and stress.

Benefits of diaphragmatic breathing have been investigated in association with meditation, eastern religions, tai chi, yoga and martial arts. Lung capacity can also be expanded by increasing the length of inhalations and exhalations. There is anecdotal evidence that the “ideal” rate of breathing is about 5-6 breaths per minute.

Posture can also improve lung function. Sitting tall and reaching overhead is an easy technique that can be beneficial. Staying hydrated and remaining as active as possible can also improve lung function. Finally, laughing is a great way of exercising abdominal muscles, not to mention improving mood.

Breath is also being used in certain medical studies. The word “breathalyzer” is usually used in the context of testing a driver for possible alcohol consumption. But scientists have been actively investigating the use of breath in the diagnosis of various diseases.

In recent years, subtle chemical changes in breath have been used to identify “breathprints” for lung cancer, liver diseases, TB and inflammatory bowel disease. Several companies are even developing breath tests for COVID, based on unique chemical patterns specifically associated with this viral infection. Such tests, while not predicted to totally replace current



methods, may be useful in situations involved in quickly screening large numbers of people.

Interest in breath and breathing techniques is not new. Indeed, this field actually dates back to the first millennium, when both Tao religion and Hinduism viewed this vital principle as being central to life. The Greek term "pneuma" and the Hebrew "ruach" merge the concept of breath with some sort of divine presence, analogous to Latin root "spiritus", the common basis of spirit and respiration.

Ongoing research is analyzing the underlying mechanism for the special power that breathing has over the mind, making it the basis of most of the current relaxation, calming and meditation techniques.

Scientific studies suggest that better breathing can improve both our physical and mental health.

*Thanks to Sting



Photo: Stanley Berman

Plastics: Be Part of the Solution

By KATHERINE SURI

Learning that nearly every piece of plastic created remains in our environment and that less than 9% of all plastics get recycled, a person might give up hope.

There are things we can do, however, to reduce the ubiquitous plastics in our environment:

Ask for, use and return those Green Go Boxes to the Bistro. Bring our own carry-out containers, such as the Mirabella coffee/tea mugs for hot beverages. From October 1, 2019, to March 9, 2020, before the Pandemic put a temporary stop to these programs, Dining Services saved \$1,500.

Bring our own shopping bags—cloth bags or reusable plastic bags. Most grocery stores have a container near an entrance for the one-time-used thin plastic bags. They will also take those deflated packing pillows. When possible, make every plastic packaging item serve twice. Bread bags can serve as pet waste bags. Plastic grocery bags can become waste can liners. Every bag we re-use is one we don't have to buy.

Refuse plastic ware at takeout restaurants.

Write our representatives in support of plastic waste reduction bills. Mirabella's Green Team periodically publishes a list of bills addressing environmental matters, both in Oregon and at the federal level.

Some good news: The Oregon Legislature just passed SB582, which establishes a producer responsibility program for "packaging and food service ware." We are the second state in the nation, following Maine, to pass such a bill.

Like that little drop of rain, which on its own couldn't do much but can join with many other drops of rain to save Farmer Brown's corn crop, we can make a difference. Your Green Team welcomes your suggestions.



Portland Diary

By NANCY MOSS

Overheard: two men waiting outside the Thai food truck near Caruthers Park have been talking about their motorcycles. "How old were you when you got your first speeding ticket?" the man wearing a baseball cap asks.

"24." How about you?"

"20. How fast were you going?"

"100. You?"

"90. It was just over the Idaho border."

One of the speaker's food is ready; the conversation ends.

II

Walking along 21st Avenue, I see people lined up inside Ken's bakery, ready for a piece of pastry and a morning coffee. Ahead of me others chat over cups of coffee at small tables set out on the sidewalk.

The old Portland: people gathering over food and drink.

Some of the shrubs next to the sidewalk are shrunken and bleached dry. Outside the bars, not yet open, tables are set up across the sidewalk and under an awning.

The new Portland: climate change and Covid.

Across the street from me a young man is carrying a bulging plastic bag full of aluminum cans.

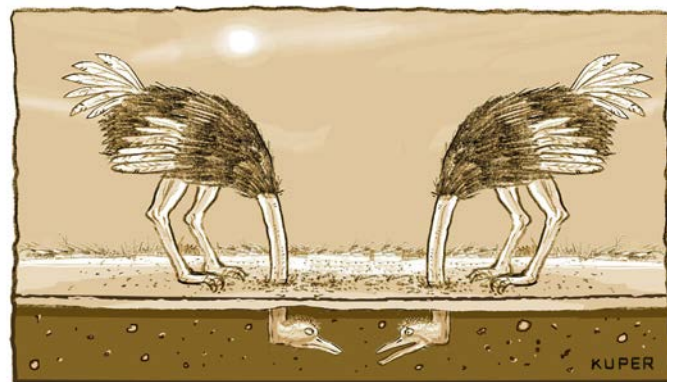
III

South of us on the greenway, Rosswood restaurant, once a stylish eatery, sports a poster: "Sadly Closed until Further Notice." Its side door, which opens off a deck littered with cottonwood fluff, bears the sign: "Face Coverings required beyond this point."

The door is dusty with shredded cobwebs and pollen. It is locked.

On the restaurant's south end a woman sits behind a shopping cart piled high with household items; the table in front of her holds a thermos, a radio blasting rap music and a few stacked goods.

Two weeks later she is gone.



"Hey how are you feeling about the climate crisis?"

Portland's Japanese Garden

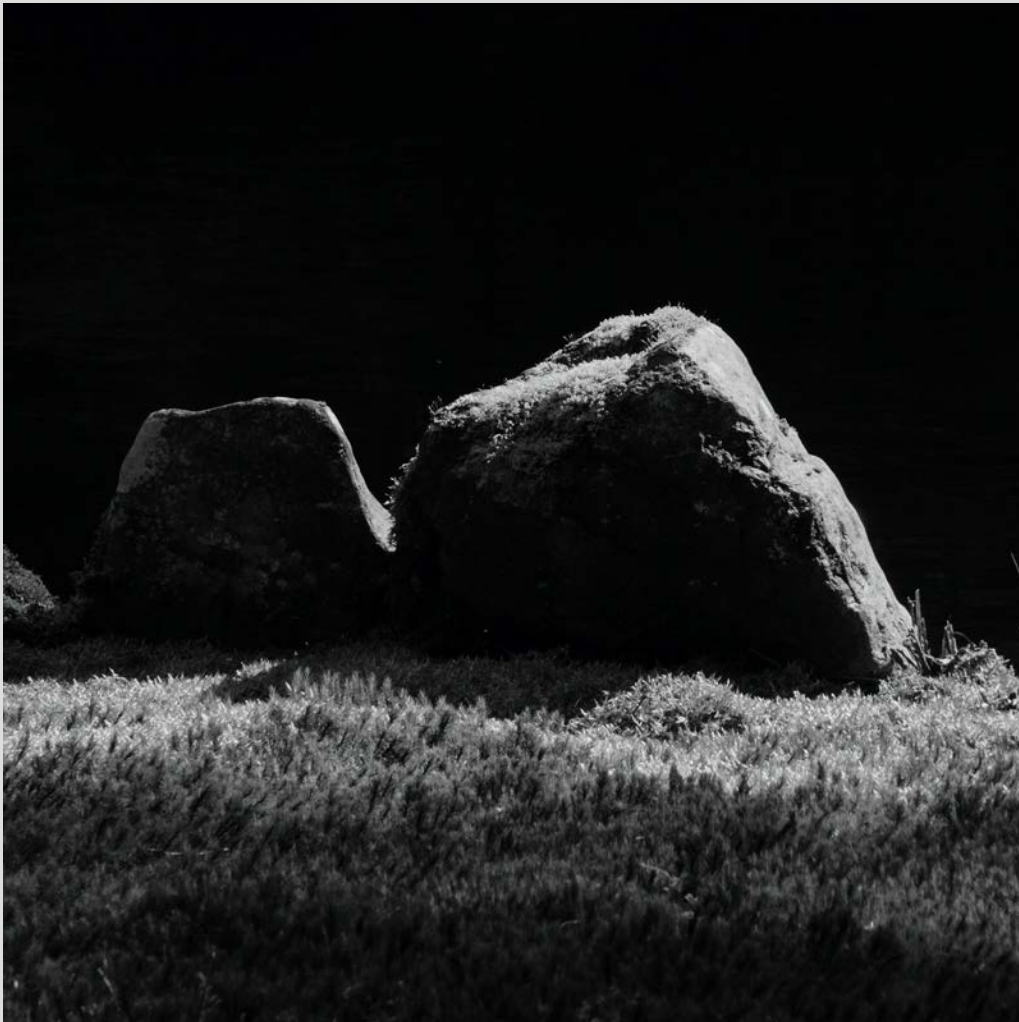
By RICHARD MOUNTS

Japanese gardens have evolved during hundreds of years. The oldest, a pond garden near Kyoto, dates from the middle of the ninth century. The first treatise on garden principles, the *Sakuteiki* (The Book of Gardening) was transcribed from earlier oral versions onto scrolls during the 12th and 13th centuries. Over time, gardens have varied from that ninth century pond form, developing into several recognizable types, including *karesansui* (dry landscape) gardens, *roji* (tea gardens), stroll gardens and modern stone gardens. Portland's Japanese Garden includes beautifully blended examples of all of these.

Japanese gardens are said to be built around stones. But, in truth, they seem to be built around metaphors and symbols. They may seem oases of

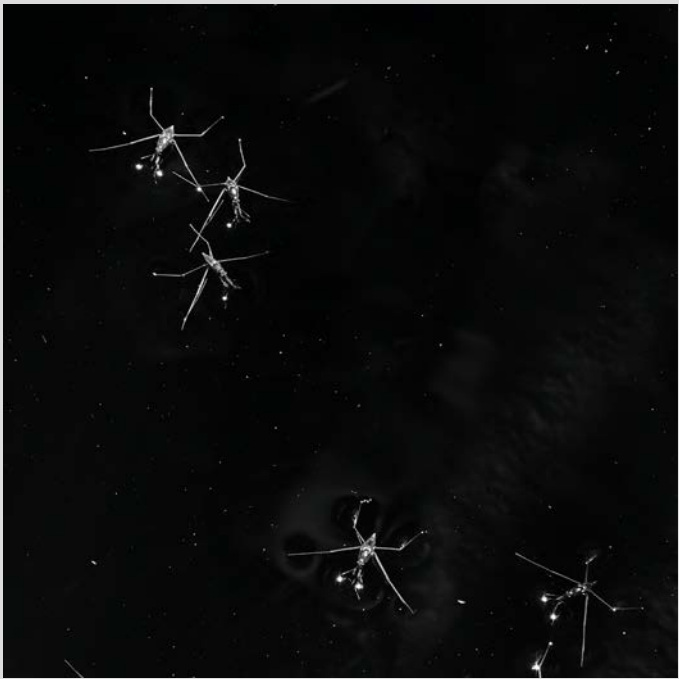
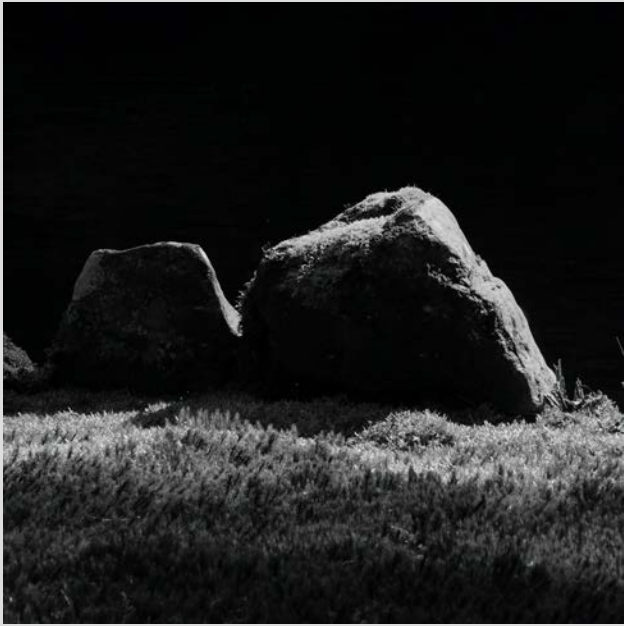
contemplation, but an eager visitor with an interpretive guidebook could end up obsessed with identifying a garden's components and their meanings. The table of contents of a recent book includes 130 separate "notes" on features such as layers, zig-zag, borrowed scenery, moss, bamboo fences, rope-work, waiting benches, edges, straw mats and more.

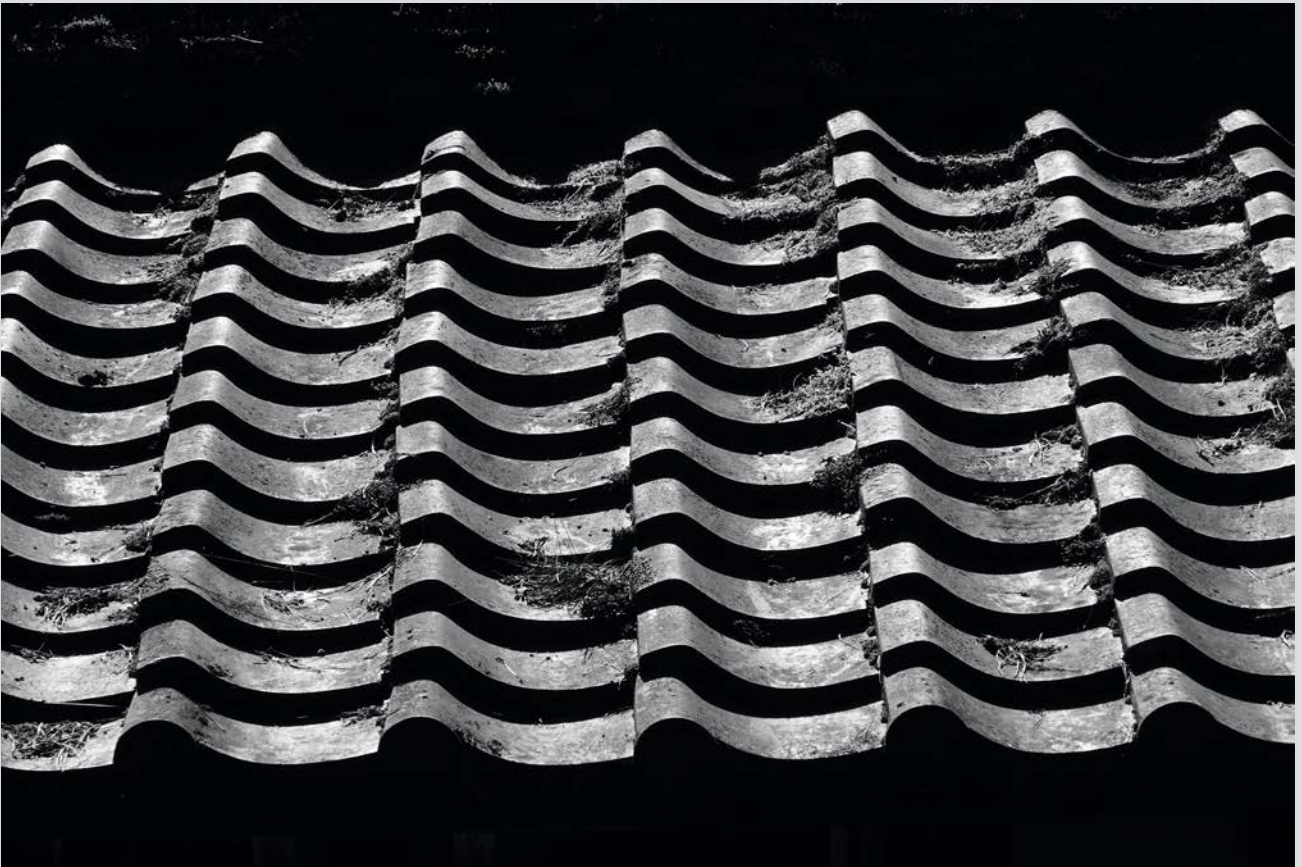
The images here don't necessarily reflect these elements. They're more like what could have been recorded by a tourist who, without advance preparation, arrived in an unknown country with no understanding of what he was seeing. Walking along, he was attracted to things that caught his eye, small moments, unexpected scenes, and sometimes literally, shiny objects.











Brooklyn Switchyard: A Study in Moving Parts

By PETE SWAN

Question: What vital hub supporting interstate transportation lies 1.5 miles east of John's Landing?

Answer: The Union Pacific Railroad's Brooklyn Switchyard.

This busy industrial workplace, almost invisible to most Portlanders, has a long history in railroading. In 1870, the Oregon & California Railroad (O&CRR) used the area to repair train cars. Seventeen years later, the Southern Pacific Railroad (SP) bought the O&CRR and its shops; by 1910, SP had constructed a 12-stall roundhouse, or enclosed round-table, and an eight-track machine shop on the site.

The switching (as opposed to repair) function was added in the 1920s. The yard had been enlarged to 29 tracks plus a huge roundtable by 1950. In the late 1960s, the yard handled an average of 2,800 railcars per day. The facility took the name of the surrounding southeast Portland neighborhood.

The Union Pacific (UP) acquired the Southern Pacific in 1996 in one of the nation's largest railroad mergers. UP operates 8,300 locomotives, over 32,200 miles of routes in 23 states west of Chicago and New Orleans. Along with the business, UP gained track and trackage-rights, rolling stock and real estate, including the switchyards in Portland.

Today, the Brooklyn Yard covers 82 acres, has eight tracks, two switch engines and 25 switches. The longest run inside the yard is 4,000 feet. The roundtable was removed in 2011. Maintenance is no longer performed at Brooklyn; much of that is now done at the Hinkle Yard – billed as a locomotive maintenance and repair facility—near the junction of Highways I-84 and I-82 close to Hermiston and also near a north-south/east-west railroad junction.

Brooklyn is now classified as an intermodal yard – cargos moving from highways to and from trains and from coastal container yards to and

from trains. The name distinguishes its function from that of a classification yard, which redirects sections of already-loaded trains to different destinations, sometimes referred to as building trains, or a manifest yard, where individual cars are routed to various local destinations according to their cargo. On slow days, 19 freights and eight Amtrak passenger trains are processed through the Brooklyn yard. There may be as many as 35 trains Wednesdays through Sundays.

Modern railroading uses unit trains. These trains bypass the Brooklyn yard and could be carrying crude oil from North Dakota on its way to refineries in Richmond, Calif. or moving grain from the Midwest to the ports of Kalama and Longview, Wash. These trains arrive empty at regional grain elevators, oil-producing centers or coal mines.

Once loaded, they leave for a single or very few destinations. Such trains can be up to 15,000 feet long and are hauled by four locomotives: one in front, two about two-thirds of the way back and a fourth at the end. Intermodal—for truck-to-train or ship-to-train cargos—cars have a low-slung design allowing them to accommodate containers stacked two high and still pass through tunnels and under low bridges. Such cars are called well cars and referred to by some as lowboys. Three to five cars are articulated to go through curves but are locked together and do not uncouple. A five-car unit can carry 10 40-foot shipping containers.

Due to federal laws regarding length of crew shifts, a new crew may well step in at Brooklyn. The crew is small: an engineer and one conductor for each train. If multiple locomotives are needed, they are un-crewed and controlled remotely from the lead engine.

Since the Brooklyn yard's longest track is 4,000 feet, sections of very long trains must be uncoupled and parked as double-overs or even triple-overs either inside the yard or on nearby sidings.

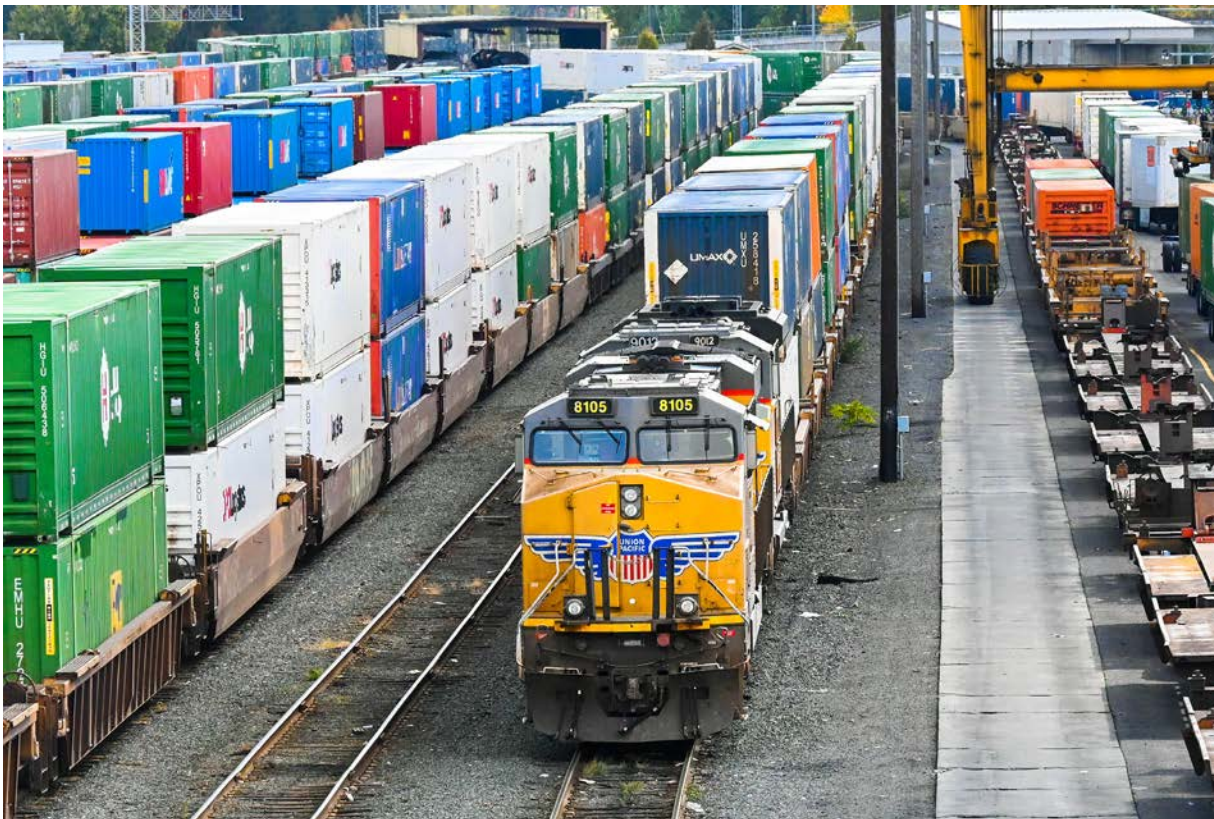


Photo: Stanley Berman



Photo: Stanley Berman

While the engineer checks temperatures and fuel levels in the locomotives, the conductor must walk the length of the train to manually perform any necessary coupling and uncoupling procedures and to inspect the couplings. A radio coordinates with the engineer. When coupling procedures are complete, the conductor must step up to the interface where the two cars have joined to connect the air hoses. Once that is accomplished, air tests on the connecting hoses ensure 90psi pressure is maintained for braking purposes.

It takes a minimum of two hours to position the sections of a long train and to do these tests.

Brooklyn is no longer a hump yard. When it was, train sections slowly rolled off a raised area to let gravity couple, or run, the cars together; at Brooklyn, the line locomotives provide the push and pull needed for coupling. If new cars are to be added or existing cars removed, switch engines are employed. The locomotives are not fueled at the yard; that is handled at the Albina Yard under the Fremont Bridge.

Being an intermodal yard, trailers and containers are loaded and unloaded at the yard using powerful straddle cranes. This tall, wide equipment moves on pneumatic tires. It is driven to the container storage area, straddles the container and once rigging is attached, hoists it off the stack (or a flat-bed truck). Then the crane is driven across the correct track with one set of its tires, straightened and then approaches the well car to be loaded. Once above that car, it lowers the container to seat it in knuckled corners in the bed of the car or on a lower-level container that is already in place. Unloading is the same process, reversed. As with long-haul trucks, research is already underway to make the cranes driverless.

The ratio – in terms of time spent -- of loading/unloading to train assembly is 9:1.

With thousands of cars moving through the yard, a radio frequency identification system (RFID) is used so each car has a unique

identifier. RFID technology was originally developed by Sprint, which was created and owned by Southern Pacific. All this data is sent by the reading devices to the yard master's office in real time. Brooklyn no longer has a yard tower since the movement/switching data – as well as management of the Steel Bridge – is all sent to and controlled by UP headquarters in Omaha.

Safety sensors and safeguards are everywhere on the main runs of modern railroads. Track-side sensors detect overheated wheel bearings, dragging equipment, abnormal wheel impacts, screeching wheels and unusual temperatures. Alarms locate the problem down to the nearest axle and convey the information to the engineer.

Main lines of all railroads now have a legally mandated electronic safeguard system called positive train control. This system tracks train location in real time via GPS and can detect over-speed situations and unauthorized train movement. Alarms are sent to the locomotive. If the engineer does not respond, an on-board computer will apply the brakes and bring the train to a stop. Union Pacific has equipped 5,515 locomotives with this equipment and has installed 210,000 wayside antennas to make it work.

Runaway trains – a very rare occurrence -- are automatically switched to the nearest siding. Although runaways would not occur inside a switchyard, retarders inside the Brooklyn yard straddle the rails in order to squeeze the wheels to a stop if and when a train section starts to move too fast.

Railroading has come a long way from coal-fired, steam-powered locomotives – see several nice examples at the Portland Rail Museum near Southeast Caruthers Street and Fourth Avenue – to today's diesel-electric haulers.

The nearly unnoticed switchyard just across the river has emerged as a key node in 21st-century transport.

I wish to acknowledge and thank Bill Burgel, former chief dispatcher for Union Pacific, for useful information and for helping a non-railroader like me over technical hurdles.

Portland's Concert Palace

By PETE SWAN

The Rose City has a gem of a concert venue. What is now the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall has a long and storied history running from the roaring '20s through the present day.

In 1928 two architects, brothers Cornelius and George Rapp, with a solid reputation for designing theaters, won a commission to design an auditorium for watching vaudeville shows. The owner was to be Portland Publix Theaters. The theater had a seating capacity of 3,036 and cost \$1,500,000.

Despite the light-hearted, comedic nature of the entertainment, the Rapps elected an indulgent style: northern Italianate. The lobby was replete with crystal chandeliers – costing \$35,000 in 1928 dollars – having hundreds of bulbs. It also featured a fountain-pool with statuary on each corner representing Europe, America, Asia, and Africa. A grand staircase rose to the lower balcony, and furnishings were purchased from a French museum. The stars' dressing rooms had private showers, hotplates and sinks. The ladies' lounge offered extras such as maids, hairdressers and a fireplace. A Louis XV-style player piano, an Knabe Ampico grand, stood on the bridge over the lobby.

Providing music for the shows was a Wurlitzer Publix #1 pipe organ costing, at the time, \$46,000. The ornate, rococo console including a keyboard allowed the organist to imitate 32 instruments and utilize 16 styles of accompaniment.

In 1930, the building became the Paramount Theater, and the shows became movies. For silent movies the mighty Wurlitzer provided thematic music.

A few years later Mirabella resident Ann Crumpacker went with her mother to see "talkies" there, and heard the Wurlitzer play for climactic passages. She says it was exciting to be there and remembers going near the stage where she could look down at the fancy pearl-white and pale blue organ console in the orchestra pit. She particularly remembers seeing movies featuring child star Freddy Bartholomew in "David Copperfield" and "Captains Courageous."

Outside, the marquee was equipped with 6,000 lights. Above the marquee was a 65-foot-high vertical sign reading "Portland" (more about that later).

John Hamrick, owner of the local chain Evergreen Theaters, purchased the building in 1936. During the depression movie tickets cost 50 cents. In postwar years, the building started to deteriorate; an exterior balcony collapsed and 350-pound chunks of masonry fell to the street. A new owner, John Haviland – who also owned the Park Haviland Hotel – bought the building and leased it to the Moyer movie chain (Luxury Theaters).

The facility no longer showed movies after 1972 and was leased to Paramount Northwest for viewing live concerts. In the five-year span ending in 1977, performers at the theater included The Grateful Dead, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen and Billy Joel. After the theater's sale in 1976 to West Coast Theaters (WCT), performers included ABBA, The Police, U2, Leonard Cohen, Roy Orbison, Prince and Kelly Clarkson.

In 1975, Haviland sold most of the furnishings and the Wurlitzer organ for \$52,000. The buyer was a Denver pizza parlor, Organ Grinder Pizza. How the mighty have fallen! Also to be included in that sale was a much-admired statue called "Surprise," but theater-goers raised \$5,000 to keep the statue in place.

The theater was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

By the early 1980s a move was afoot to create a performing arts center in Portland. The center –today the Portland '5 -- was funded in 1981 through \$19 million bond. The physical components of the new center are now the Keller Auditorium, the Antoinette Hatfield Hall, comprising the Newmark Theater, the Winningstad Theatre and the Brunish Theatre, and the

Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, formerly the very same Paramount Theater.

The city of Portland owns the land and buildings, but management has been shifted to a subdivision of Metro, the Metro Exposition & Recreation Commission (MERC) which also handles the Expo Center and the Convention Center. Your reporter's backstage tour of the Schnitz was thanks to the Portland '5 director of operations, Ed Williams, a person with an encyclopedic knowledge of the building's technical equipment and of its many nooks and crannies.

West Coast Theaters declined the city's offer to buy the building so Portland used eminent domain to condemn the theater, paying WCT \$4.1 million in compensation. The old structure badly needed refurbishing, and the city decided to restore it to its original grandeur. The project, begun



Photo: Richard Mounis

in September 1983, was completed a year later at a cost of \$10 million. Harold and Arlene Schnitzer were keenly interested in the restoration and became major contributors, giving the final \$1 million.

The famous Portland sign was refurbished but fell off a crane while being installed and crashed to the street, requiring the present sign – now 80 feet high—with its 5,000 lights, to be created anew. Polishing and installing new crystals gave the original chandeliers a rebirth; they are lowered -- by windlasses in the attic—for twice-a-year cleaning and bulb replacement.

The auditorium now seats 2,776 concertgoers. The new performance area has a 54-foot-high proscenium with a curtain that is a reproduction of the original. Dressing rooms serve up to 90 performers.

The 3,000-square-foot stage can be extended 13 feet over the first several rows in the orchestra, sacrificing the seats, for symphony performances that include large choirs on risers in the back. The front-most portion of the stage is on a scissor-lift elevator and can be lowered to create a 40-person orchestra pit for mixed-media performances. The stage-wing walls are now cleverly mounted on rollers and can be swung into place when needed.

The acoustical panels that used to help create a shell over the stage have been replaced by a high-tech electronic system called Constellation. This involves 100 microphones and 300 speakers distributed throughout the concert hall (you will even see six units on the ceiling) and connected by 130 miles of wiring. The system, created by Meyer Sound in Berkeley, with a cost of nearly \$4,000,000, was installed in May.

Another six-plus million was spent for “stage elements, acoustical treatments, and draperies” The entire complex of mikes and speakers had to be calibrated by a process called voicing, and this final step — taking five days, two shifts a day — was completed in mid-September. This system is adaptive: It automatically makes small adjustments to optimize the listening

experience whether the performer is a single speaker, a recitalist or a full orchestra and chorus.

To see a short video about this system, go to meyersound.com/product/constellation.

The building’s ninety-three-year history contains its own drama. A failed actor of C western movies visited the building in the thirties replete with his holstered six-shooter. As he attempted to rob the box office, police arrived, leading to a gun fight. No humans were hurt, but a stray bullet is said to have snapped off two fingers of the Surprise statue, a young woman surprised while bathing, modestly trying to cover herself, in the lobby. If you look carefully, you can see the line where the fingers were glued back on.

Another story, nowhere documented, is that in the vaudeville days a plank walkway above the street connected the theater to the Heathman Hotel. It is said some of the dancing girls used the walkway between shows to visit gentlemen in the hotel.

The Oregon Symphony—known as the Portland Symphony until 1967—celebrates its 125th year this season. It began performing in the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall upon its completion in 1984. Under the baton of Music Director David Danzmayr, it will present 54 classical music concerts plus eight pops concerts in its 2021-2022 season at the Concert Hall. Featured soloists in the classical series include Yefim Bronfman (Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3) and Joshua Bell (Dvorak’s violin concerto). The season includes Brahms’ Third Symphony, Dvorak’s New World symphony, Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 and Handel’s Messiah.

The lovely venue, center of this story, has a long and colorful past and has been reborn as a national-class concert auditorium. Treat yourself to a performance at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall or, as the locals affectionately call it, The Schnitz.

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Why Do I Run?

By JOHN FOREMAN

“Impressive,” our new neighbor at the Mirabella said as she stepped into the elevator. On my way down to begin a mid-morning run, I could not tell whether it was the novelty of an old man in running shorts and a T-shirt with a ball cap, sunglasses and a face mask that moved her to speak, or whether she had a well-developed sense of irony.

Feeling like Darth Vader in his underwear, I apologetically explained that my cell phone, prominently displayed in its holder on my left bicep, was set to a heart rate monitor that I needed to watch to keep my heart rate below the level that my last cardiologist thought appropriate for my atrial fibrillation.

The elevator door opened on the first floor; she repeated, “Impressive,” and walked off.

As I walked through quiet whooshes of the front doors, I started the app on my cell phone that would chart my exact path, my heart rate, my speed, and the distance that I ran. I also started a different app on my iWatch that would record most of the same information and contained an atrial fibrillation alarm. As I began to shuffle down the sidewalk in the cool air and bright sun, my mind turned to a question that was, perhaps, really on the woman in the elevator’s mind, “Why would someone like me choose to run?”

My wife of 52 years calls it an addiction. As a lawyer and as a judge for over 40 years, I have worked with people who abuse substances. The most recent scientific studies show the psychoactive chemical created by running is a non-addictive endocannabinoid – similar to what is in marijuana – not an endorphin or opiate. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/10/well/move/running-exercise-mental-effects.html?smid=em-share>) Mark Twain said when someone asked if he was addicted to tobacco, it was easy to quit smoking; he’d done it hundreds of times. And I have stopped running many, many times.

My life as a runner began in high school. As a senior and fastest sprinter, I found myself co-captain of the track team. Ames High School had, during the early 1960s when I was in school, a tradition of winning every meet we entered, including the Iowa State High School Championships. During the state indoor championships my senior year we were in position to win again.

In the last event of the day, the mile relay, we had only to place among the top four teams to win. We had beaten most of the teams the week before in a statewide, tune-up meet.

I ran the second leg, which in a mile relay is the most dangerous leg. The teams’ first runners run in assigned lanes with a staggered start so each team will run the same distance before the first pass. When the first runner passes the baton to the second runner, the second runner breaks from the assigned lane to the inside lane, which is especially important indoors. When that break occurs, runners sometimes run into each other. Sometimes they lose their balance. Sometimes they fall. Two runners in front of me suddenly fell just as I tried to pass them during the break.

In football, a chop block—two blockers contacting a member of the opposing team at the same time, with at least one of the blocks making contact below the waist—is a penalty.

In track, if you get hit with a chop block while running in a race, you go down. No flag is thrown. The race is not rerun.

I got up and ran as hard as I could. Too little, too late. We lost the state indoor championship by one point.

We won the rest of our track meets that year, including

the outdoor state championship. When we go back to Iowa for reunions, I always go to look at the long line of trophies and at the photos of the teams. And I remember.

I have run that race thousands of times since in my mind. Often, I think about it while I run. I thought about it again briefly that day after I left the Mirabella. It is hard to say why I feel responsible for the only “loss” our track team had while I was in high school. It is harder still to believe that I continue to run to atone for the loss. But I do remember.

Another theory that might explain why I run deals with my lifelong pursuit of ways to manage stress. I like to think of running as a form of moving meditation. After high school I ran on the track team at Iowa State University where I was just an average athlete. And then I ran, almost daily, through graduate school, law school, as a trial lawyer and as a trial court judge. At each stage, I seemed to find plenty of stress in my work and relief in running.

After about 25 years of running, I started to notice that I was getting unusually tired after challenging runs. I finally talked to my doctor. After many tests, doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale told me I had a rare defect in my heart called a right A-V fistula.

The cardiologists told me they came across right A-V fistulas about once every 10 years, usually on cadavers. Generally, the link between the artery and the vein ruptured during exertion or later in life. A cardiologist told me if that happened to me, “you would be dead before you hit the floor.”

The good news was that if the link was tied off, everything should be fine. All I needed was a type of open-heart surgery none of the surgeons had ever performed.

The good news about the surgery was that the surgeon found the link between the artery and the vein on the back of the heart, tied it off, and fixed it. The bad news was the anesthesiologist misplaced something called a Swan-Ganz catheter in my jugular vein and I nearly bled to death.

To maintain blood pressure to my brain, the surgical team pumped in 40 pints of blood and plasma over the next couple of hours and the surgeon turned off one of the anesthetics because it also lowered my blood pressure. As a result, I regained consciousness during the surgery, while the other anesthetic kept me completely paralyzed. After they found and repaired the two holes in my jugular vein, the surgeon gave me a large amount of yet another drug to prevent me from remembering what happened.

Unfortunately, it was not completely successful, and I remembered some of what occurred. In fact, after the surgery, it seemed to be the only thing I could think about day and night. Later, I would be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

I found that the most effective way to control the stress from the recurring memories was to run. So as soon as I could run, I did.

For the next 30 years, I did not run as far, or as fast, or as often as before. I took up riding a bicycle. I had knee surgery. However, even after breaks that lasted from a few days to a few weeks, I would return to running at least two or three times a week. During those years my internists and cardiologists would tell me that other forms of exercise would be as healthy for me as running, but it was OK to continue to run.

All that changed during a routine physical four years ago when I was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation, an electrical arrhythmia of the heart. Luckily, the fibrillation seems to be under control with the use of medication.

The cardiologists seem unanimous that it is important for me to maintain the fitness of my heart. So I am trying to



Iowa States’ John Foreman prepares to run the 440 and mile relay, in addition to the triple jump, high jump and novice hurdles.

maintain its fitness by, you guessed it, running. When I run, I am supposed to keep my heart rate well below my maximum and keep taking my medication. I monitor my heart rate with the gadgets on my cell phone and iWatch that I showed the woman on the elevator.

So far, it seems to be working.

Rene Descartes, the 17th century French philosopher, tried to understand the world around him by starting with basic truths. After much thought he found what was for him a starting point. He characterized it in Latin as, "Cogito, ergo sum." It means, "I think, therefore I am."

Perhaps my starting point is, "Curro, ergo sum." In Latin it means, "I run, therefore I am."

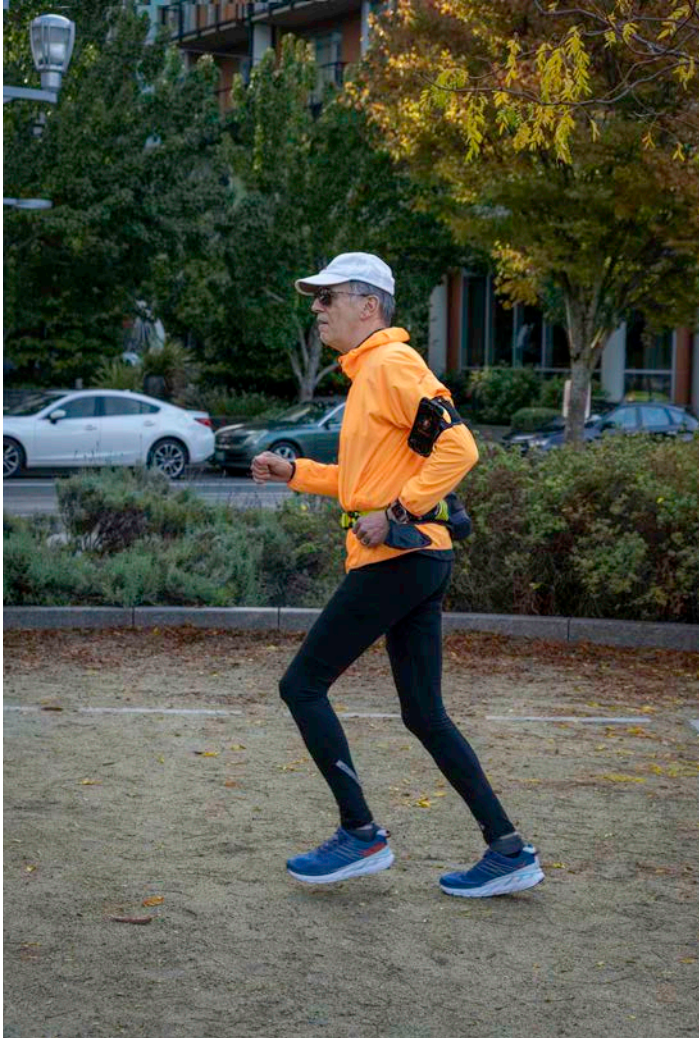
Three Poems

By TERRI HOPKINS

She was listening to an interview with a famous actor, who has a shelf full of award hardware, and just wrote a thriller. Her husband asked, How old is he now? She said, Old. Eighty eight. That's old. He said, You say that now.

She is visiting the gallery, long closed, again. Her companion has the key. She says, Oh, they never took down the show. The light is beautiful. She takes a picture.

When the girl was ten, she couldn't decide which to do first: Win gold at the Olympics, or become President of the United States. When her mother was ten, she had decided not to learn to type.



John Foreman in Running Form Today

Photo: Ron Mendonca



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Happy Holidays from the Staff of 3550

Rubriconase Reno*

By ROSEMARY HOLE

A few days before Christmas in a small midwestern town, it was early evening but already dark. Snow fell soundlessly on streets, cars parked and people dashing from one store to another. The business district, consisting of Broadway and Main streets, sparkled. The windows of every business were lit and decorated with enticing displays. Recorded music escaped from some shops and floated along the street.

I stood with other high school students on Broadway, right in front of the decorated windows of MaryAnne's Dress Shop and across the street from Isabella County State Bank and Ken's Men's Shop. Our foreign language teacher, tiny, ancient, Miss Ethel Lamore, was busy passing out sheet music for the language department's annual Christmas caroling event.

Miss Lamore was something of a legend. She'd been teaching for generations, was nearly blind and a tyrant in the classroom. She ruled her domain and while students may have made fun of her outside of her hearing, there was no monkey business under the gaze of those cloudy light-blue eyes.

I can see her still, bundled from head to toe in a pale blue wool coat with hat anchored by a scarf around the hat and tied under her chin. She wore black buckled overshoes. After she got us aligned, some on the sidewalk with the rest standing below the curb in icy slush, we began to sing a repertoire of Christmas carols in Latin, German, French and Spanish. Miss Lamore beamed as we showed off the language skills she had taught us.

Cars slowly rumbled by, the sound of their engines muffled by the snow, and as shoppers paused to listen or smile, the magic of the season enveloped us all.

Yes, our feet were cold and there was homework waiting, but that music-box setting and our voices rising into the snowy dark made a lasting impression, a lovely holiday memory.

*This Latin version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" comes from former Latin teacher Eddie O'Hara.



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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Santa With a Wink

By MARY BISHOP

Christmas is a magical time of year, or so they say. But there was a period when I dreaded the holidays. We had five children under the age of 8 who dashed into the holidays in high gear.

For me the problem was Santa and his presents. Buying gifts was challenging with no Amazon to drop off sealed packages, no storage units to hide them and, worse, no way to wrap them except under the cover of night.

At the end of the day, the last thing I wanted to do was wrap presents. I decided to declare a moratorium on the children. For one hour no one could be in the house, and to seal the deal I locked all the doors and hunkered down for some wrapping.

I had barely begun when the doorbell rang, and there was pounding

on the doors and windows. I gave up when I saw one of the boys standing outside the window with blood dropping down his shirt.

Yes, the cut on his head needed stitches at the ER.

OK, that ploy was not going to work. Back to weary night-wrapping.

Christmas morning arrived, and my husband and I took the presents up from their quasi-hiding place in the basement. They looked like a family of mice had been enjoying them, but it was really my miserable wrapping skills and my children's equally miserable peeking skills.

It made no difference; in seconds there was a blizzard of tissue and ribbon amid happy children.

The meaning of Christmas was hidden in that mess. Not a perfect time, not without a bit of deceit, but a magical time.

So give Santa a wink and wish everyone a merry Christmas.



