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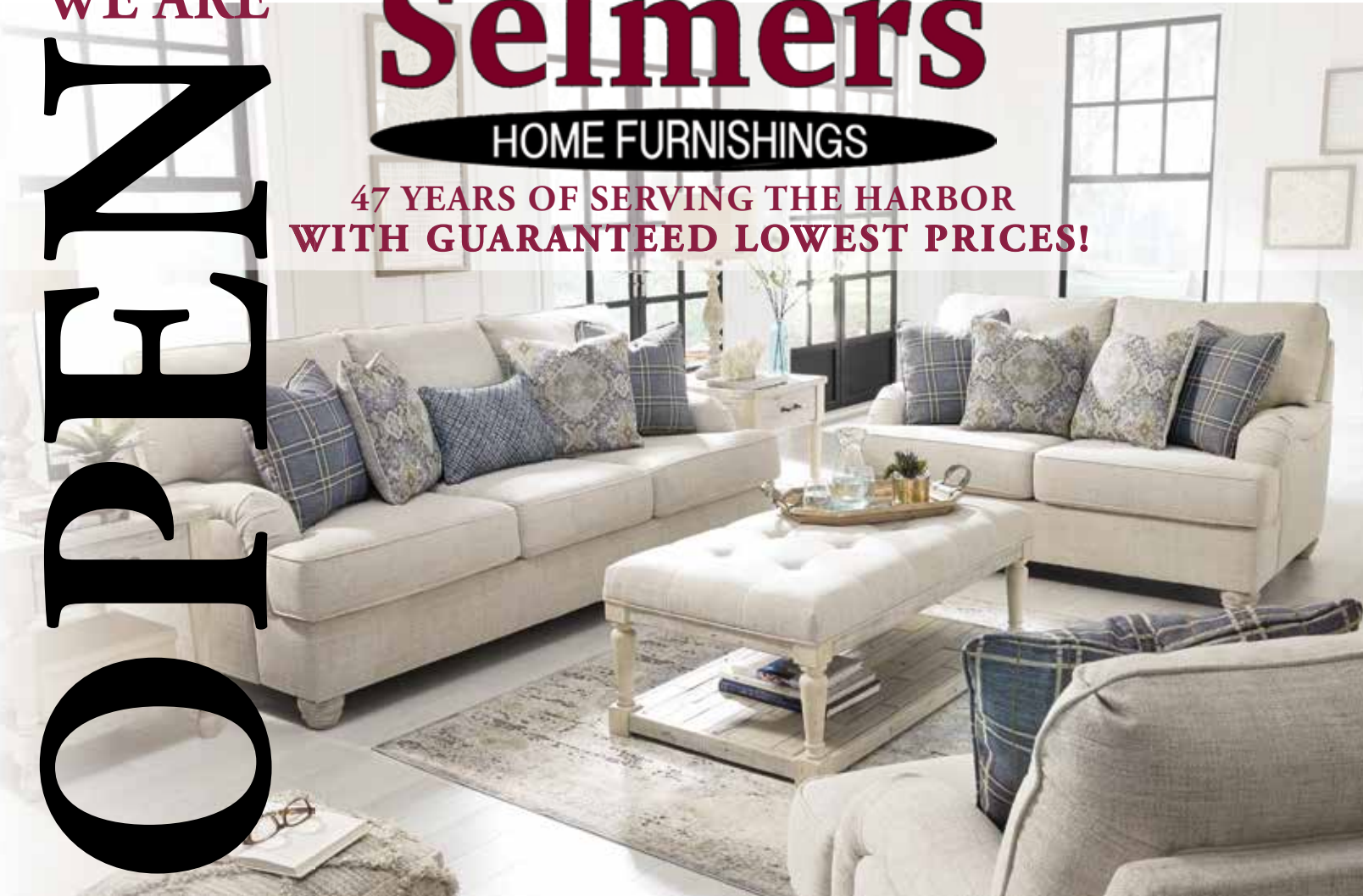
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Photo courtesy of Ezekiel Serrano

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Ezekiel Serrano with his Eagle Song Carrier carving in the Tribal Council Chambers in Taholah.

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Quinault Artist Ezekiel Serrano Brings Healing



Ezekiel Serrano carving with an adze

BY CHRISTINE VINCENT

For the Pacific Northwest indigenous people, art is a carrier of culture, of tribal legend and history. Art is created in families and connects the community. Most importantly, art is a way of healing, of recovering spiritual roots.

For Taholah artist Ezekiel Serrano, 36, healing is a vocation expressed both in his work as a certified group trainer at the Taholah Indian Health Clinic and in his deeply spiritual art.

Serrano's work at the clinic includes teaching traditional skills such as gathering and preparing medicinal herbs and living off the land. Many elders struggle with diabetes and benefit from a return to a traditional diet, Serrano says.

While teaching them, Serrano is learning a wealth of knowledge about the history of his people.

"I could quit my job and be a full-time artist, but my work in the clinic goes hand in hand with my art," he explains. "In order to create good art, one needs inner balance. My work helps me keep my spiritual infrastructure in place."

Born to a Quinault mother and a Filipino father, Serrano lived only the first four years of his life in Taholah. His family's move to Hoquiam placed a significant distance between the boy and his Quinault roots.



Eagle feather carvings

While attending Hoquiam schools, Serrano discovered his love for art, taking art classes throughout middle School and high school, and even in college. After earning his bachelor's degree in biology from Eastern Washington University, he parked cars for a year at the Quinault Casino before landing his current position at the Taholah Clinic.

Serrano says he deeply enjoys his work with the elders. "Gathering camas



Eagle Song Carrier carving

root and cooking stinging nettles brought me back to the land," he says. "I was back from the fraternities and clubs. I got re-rooted."

In Northwest Coastal art, traditional geometric shapes and stylized figures constitute a language in which the artist tells the spiritual history of his tribe. The shapes are intricately connected reflecting the connection of the human community with their natural and supernatural environment, Serrano explains. He had studied legends and tribal history online and in books to enlarge his artistic vocabulary before the Quinault elders helped him learn art the indigenous way.

The artist's immersion in tribal culture has resulted in a stunning array of traditional Quinault art, including ceremonial masks, paddles, drums and figurines. At the same time, he has been exploring new ways of using tribal motifs in paintings, vector designs and, most recently, silk screening.

Many mythological characters inhabit Serrano's art, including Thunderbird, the supernatural messenger from the spiritual realm

"People stop by to talk and to pray," says Serrano. "I have everybody take a knife and cut. This is community work."

to the physical. He is featured in a beautiful, brightly painted ceremonial mask. Other masks represents Raven, crafty and creative, who gets into a lot of trouble but is also smart and wise; and Wolf, the protector, who is delicate and calm but at the same time a fierce leader.

Carvings of two wooden feathers tell of the mythical Eagle with large feathers that pulled off the top of a cedar tree. He carried it to the top of a mountain and all sorts of birds dwelt in the tree. Serrano's 6-by-3-foot Eagle Song Carrier carving has a place of honor as a backdrop in the Taholah Tribal Council Chambers. Eagle is a knowledge keeper. A carving of Eagle's image was traditionally carried in ceremonies.

The wood carving Salmon Run is a 5-foot-diameter circular relief depicting the life cycle of the salmon with a creator mask in the center. This carving depicts a magnified version of a spindle. Traditionally everyday objects such as spindles, baskets, boxes, combs, spoons, and paddles were beautifully decorated in

All photos courtesy of Ezekiel Serrano



Guardian medicine figure

Quinault culture and imbued with spiritual significance. Each shape, each figure has a name and a story connecting everyday objects with the spiritual world, Serrano says.

"Art is sacred," declares Serrano. As a Christian, he is trying to show the tribe how Christianity and indigenous beliefs come together. "God spoke to us in different ways in the early times," he explains. "He spoke in legends." Not everybody in the tribe agrees with him, but they respect his beliefs.

Serrano has been prolific in his art since he returned to Taholah.

(Continued on page 9)



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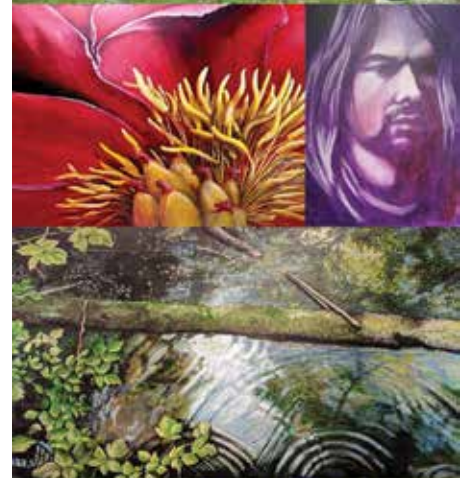
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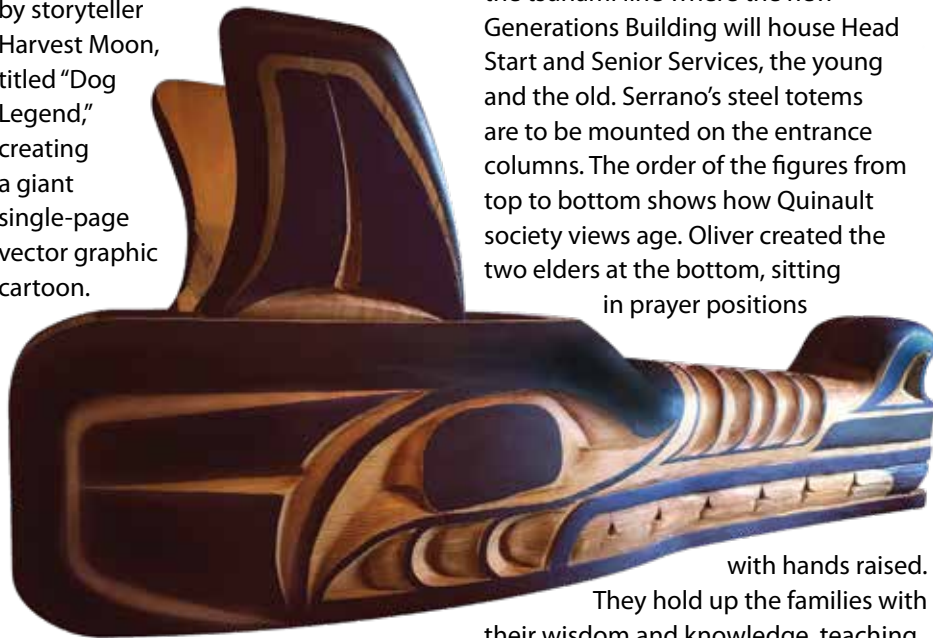
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Quinault Artist *(Continued)*

His work has been recognized at home and beyond. A selection is on exhibit in the Quinault Cultural Center, 807 5th Ave., in Taholah. From his strong foundation in traditional design, Serrano has taken his art into the modern world, creating promotional designs for events and organizations.

In 2018, he won a contest designing a logo for the Food Sovereignty Coalition, a group of 43 tribes promoting traditional foods. In the same year, Serrano was proud to collaborate with another Quinault tribal member on a commission for the Tribal Tales Exhibition at the Seattle Children's Museum. He illustrated a story written by storyteller

Harvest Moon, titled "Dog Legend," creating a giant single-page vector graphic cartoon.



The story was hung in a case of Plexiglas for children to read and touch.

In the same year, Marvin Oliver, a Quinault/Alaskan elder and professor of art at Washington State University, came to introduce Taholah artists to new techniques and media. He inspired Serrano to learn silk screening, which has become a favorite technique to create multiple copies of his artwork. Under Oliver's mentorship, Serrano enthusiastically embarked on a project of great significance for the tribe, a pair of totems cut out from sheets of steel with decorative oxidized shadings.

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All photos courtesy of Ezekiel Serrano

**Above: bent cedar boxes
Below: wolf mask**

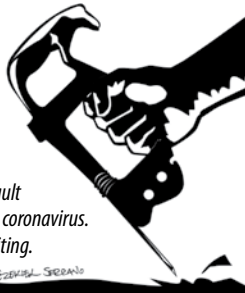
The Taholah community is in the process of raising the village above the tsunami line where the new Generations Building will house Head Start and Senior Services, the young and the old. Serrano's steel totems are to be mounted on the entrance columns. The order of the figures from top to bottom shows how Quinault society views age. Oliver created the two elders at the bottom, sitting in prayer positions

with hands raised. They hold up the families with their wisdom and knowledge, teaching the younger generation what they need to know. The adults take refuge under the wings of the double-headed eagle, the knowledge keeper. On top, Chithwin, the bear, represents the youth.

Serrano is currently working on another large commission for the tribe, a project close to his heart as a healer. The Quinault Museum has recently recovered The Guardian, an 18-inch healing statue from a museum in Chicago. Serrano was commissioned by the tribe to carve a 17-foot version of The Guardian to be mounted on a hillside in Taholah. His knowledgeable

mentors, cousins Titus and Guy Capoeman, are collaborating on this project. A large cedar log is housed under a lean-to of the veterans' building. The site right on the river is ideal.

"People stop by to talk and to pray," says Serrano. "I have everybody take a knife and cut. This is community work." He is using handmade tools in his work, among them an adze.

While using his adze to carve his healing statue, Serrano was inspired to create his own version of the power fist symbol. A black and white computer graphic of a fist pulling an adze conveys this healer's take on the symbol: "The fist should be used for work, for creating!" 

At press time, Taholah, as part of the Quinault Reservation, is closed to visitors due to the coronavirus. Check ahead for future opening before visiting.

Pillars of Wellness design, freshly silk screened and drying.



Musical Duo Adds to the Rich Cultural Life of the Harbor

BY JULIANA WALLACE

Twelve years ago, mezzo-soprano Christine Hill sat in a rehearsal for the annual Christmas Cantata at the Montesano United Methodist Church, a family holiday tradition. “All of a sudden, this amazing, glorious voice came out (of the bass section),” she remembers. “I wondered, ‘who in the world is that, and how did they get him?’”

The voice belonged to Ken Albert, newly arrived in Montesano with his family. Within days, he called Christine to request voice lessons. They shared similar tastes in music and quickly discovered that their

voices blended well together. Once they built up a repertoire, they began performing and recording together. The duo recently released their third album, titled “Temptation.”

The two vocalists sing a range of styles, from jazz standards to pop songs of various decades and tunes from the likes of Elvis and Lionel Richie. Though trained in opera, Hill’s deliciously smooth voice seems built for jazz and provides the perfect balance to Albert’s rich bass. In normal times, they sing at venues throughout the Harbor, from festivals to coffee shops and everything in between.

Hill’s name rings familiar to local music and theater aficionados. A classically trained musician, she grew up in Grays Harbor, attending Aberdeen High



Vocalists Ken Albert and Christine Hill recently released their third album titled “Temptation.”

Photo by Jill Bonelli

School before earning degrees in music at Western Washington University. In the past 30 years she has taught hundreds of local students, both in her private studio and at Grays Harbor College. Many of her students continue to delight audiences. One of her students, Aberdeen’s Ben Fagerstedt, wowed crowds when he was handed the mic at a Michael Buble’ concert he was attending at The Tacoma Dome in 2019.

Albert moved to Montesano in 2008 and quickly immersed himself in local life. He currently serves as the Grays Harbor County Treasurer but says music is “in my DNA.” Years ago, as a young man in the military, Albert auditioned for a talent show. He took home first prize and has been singing ever since.

Hill and Albert have appeared in numerous local musical theater


productions at the Bishop Center and with the Driftwood Players. In fact, Hill and her husband, Shawn, appeared on stage together in leading roles in a Bishop Center production of “The Sound of Music.” And for years, Hill worked behind the scenes as vocal director for the Grays Harbor College spring musicals. She and Albert both emphasize the significant role music and theater play in the community.

“One of the things I love about musical theater is that people come together for a common goal,” explains Hill. “Everybody works together: the crew, the pit orchestra, the actors and musicians. It’s a wonderful thing to do that.”

Like other performers in the area, Hill and Albert have had to adapt to the new normal this year.

They record music for church services and YouTube and hope to do live concerts over Zoom soon. Albert and his wife, Donna (also an accomplished musician) have kept busy writing and recording original music at home.

Meanwhile, Hill and Albert’s new album, “Temptation,” is available at Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, Amazon, Pandora and Deezer. Listeners can sit back and enjoy classic love songs through the decades including the title track “Temptation,” as well as “The Nearness of You” and “We’ve Got Tonight.”

And someday soon, when life begins to open up, Albert recommends spending an evening rediscovering the area’s music scene. “Grays Harbor is rich in talent,” he says. “Anytime there is live music in the area, go see what’s there. In almost every case, it’s very, very good.” 

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Popular Taqueria San Jose Offers Tasty Tacos, Sense of Community



and his location, which provides plenty of parking and quick access to the restaurant to pick up food.

The restaurant's reputation includes glowing reviews online: "Hands down best tacos ever. ... Try their hot salsa. I will make a special trip all the way just for this place. They love what they do and it shows," says one Yelp reviewer from Spokane.

Photo by Gail Ayres

Taqueria San Jose's owner, Alberto Fonseca, enjoys working with nephews, Manuel, Eduardo and Antonio.

BY GAIL GREENWOOD AYRES

Tasty, authentic Mexican food, served quickly for a reasonable price are the trio of reasons why Grays Harborites – as well as those passing through – can't say enough about Taqueria San Jose in South Aberdeen. And, it's what keeps them coming back.

But the secret ingredient – the salsa on top – is the warmth and friendliness of owner Alberto Fonseca, who talks and teases with customers in English and Spanish. His employees, nephews Antonio, Eduardo and Manuel Fonseca, also clearly enjoy interacting with people as they quickly cook and plate hot meals.

"We love the touch of the people, it makes a big difference," says Alberto, 48. "I don't want to just make good food, but also give friendly cheer, to stop and talk. We are also providing a sense of community."

The restaurant's location in the food court across from the movie theater at The Shoppes at Riverside Mall is perfectly situated to chat with

customers, including PUD workers, Grays Harbor College students, teachers, prison workers, tourists, and families enjoying a burrito or tacos before or after a movie.

With the Covid-19 shutdowns and the temporary closing of the theater, Alberto says he's glad for a good reputation, a healthy take-out clientele

For a small restaurant, the menu is extensive, but their burritos and tacos are the most popular. Recently, Alberto added a new creation to the menu – asada fries, nachos made with French fries instead of tortilla chips.

The food tastes authentic and fresh, he says, because they make everything

(Continued on page 14)



Photo by Gail Ayres



Taqueria San Jose

(Continued)

right there. While meals are quickly put together, it is anything but typical fast food. The tacos – served open face on small corn tortillas with a choice of meat – come perfectly seasoned and beautifully garnished. The burritos are generous in size and bursting with flavor.

“We cook from scratch. We make the chicken and beef here, the rice, fresh guacamole and the salsa Mexicana,” he said. In fact, the salsa Mexicana, also called pico de gallo, is sold in area markets and farmstands, including Jay’s Farmstand in Hoquiam, J’s Farmstand in Aberdeen, Thriftway Pickrite in Montesano and the Front Street Market at Seabrook.

To accompany a meal, in addition to typical soft drinks, diners can order authentic Mexican fare including horchata, jarritos and varying fresh juices including carrot, cantaloupe, pineapple, strawberry and hibiscus.

The youngest of eight brothers, Alberto



“I don’t want to just make good food, but also give friendly cheer, to stop and talk. We are also providing a sense of community.”

– Alberto Fonseca

and his brother Ignacio opened the Aberdeen restaurant in 2001 with another partner. Then it was called Los Gallos (The Roosters). In 2005, he and Ignacio bought out their partner. Then in 2018, when Ignacio decided to retire, Alberto bought the restaurant and changed its name.

Taqueria San Jose is a name that honors his hometown in Mexico. San Jose de Gracia, with a population of about 5,000 people, is in the Jalisco state of Mexico, near Guadalajara.

That’s where his father and mother, Antonio and Carmen, now both gone, began selling food. His father invented a new dish with mashed potato filled tacos, fried with cabbage and red sauce on top. He tried out his creation, dubbed “tacos dorados” at a carnival. It was such a hit, that he continued to sell it on the neighborhood streets, and eventually turned a portion of their home into a small restaurant.

Alberto, who only attended school through sixth grade, fondly remembers peddling his father’s homemade ice cream with a cart in the afternoons and helping sell tacos at dinner time.

Now with his own successful business, he is grateful for the opportunity to learn responsibility early. And, noting his lack of formal education, he wants to

(Continued on page 18)

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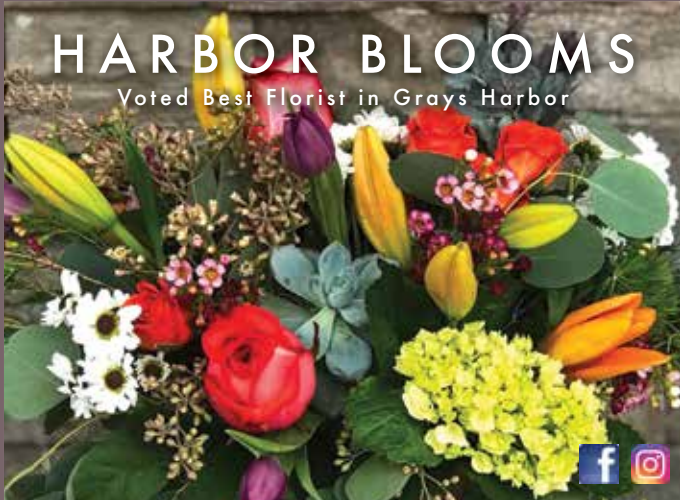
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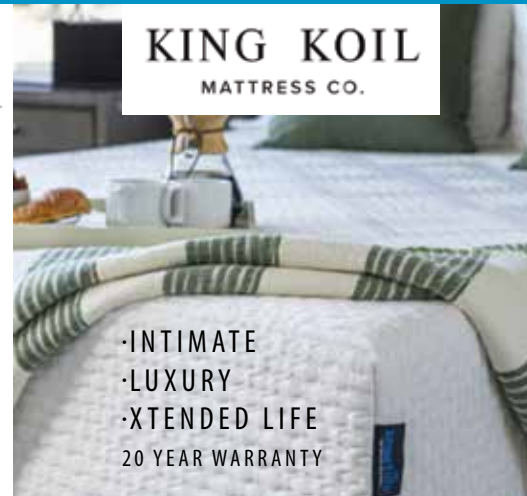


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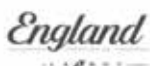
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Taqueria San Jose *(Continued)*

encourage others: "Never stop believing in yourself. You can go as far as you want."

While Alberto honors his birthplace by naming his restaurant after it, he and his wife, Maria, have clearly made Aberdeen their home. This is where they've raised their four sons, Alberto Jr., 22; Osbaldo, 19; Estevan, 15; and Imanol, 10. Of them, he said, Estevan, in particular, seems to have an interest and a knack for cooking.

While being in the restaurant business during a pandemic hasn't been easy, Alberto says he is grateful for all the support the community has given the restaurant this last year as well as the past 19 years.

Taqueria San Jose is currently open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Check Facebook page for updates or (360) 538-4855. 



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When Love and Creativity Artistic Duo Robin and John Gumaelius

PHOTOS & STORY BY MARGUERITE GARTH

John Gumaelius reminisces how he wooed Robin years ago when they were both students enrolled in the fine art department of Brigham Young University. "She made these giant sculptures but somehow they always tilted to one side or another," he says. "I made her a wood stand with a metal pole to hold them straight."

And so began an enduring love, marriage and artistic collaboration that has produced four lovely children, a hand-built house and art studio on

15 acres, and highly valued artistic creations, including 12 whimsical critters stationed on corners in downtown Aberdeen.

The Gumaelius' compound is located off a long and winding road between Raymond and Montesano on the North River. Upon entering the cleared expanse there is an instant realization of encountering something unusual. Everywhere the eye rests, a beguiling object engages. Faces peer out of walls, colorful bird-like figures flash in the daylight, gates glow with intricate metal designs. It is like walking into a fairytale world.

The Gumaelius' artistic collaboration is both intuitive and instinctual. "John and I have a fluid working relationship," Robin says. "We trade roles constantly in our artwork and in our home responsibilities."

The Gumaeluses both sculpt in clay. John usually creates the birdlike figures whereas Robin does the animals and

"Radio stories, history books, hiking adventures, neighbors spied and strangers watched in stores jangle together in our heads and come so freely to our fingers that when we see the finished pieces we are often delighted."

— Robin Gumaelius





Meet

face characters, but not always. John also does the metal and woodwork that embellish their sculptures.

"Although many of our skills are interchangeable, there are some areas each feels more comfortable leaving to the other," Robin explains.

But where do the ideas for their highly unusual and innovative creations come from?

"Some images come from a secret storage place inside. We don't usually have a specific story in mind as we begin; rather the story unfolds itself as we work on the sculpture," Robin says.

John explains it differently. "I am driven to make objects I find beautiful. Instead of thinking my art in existence, I feel it into existence. Like breathing, it happens on its own."

Robin enumerates some of the things that inspire the pair: "Radio stories, history books, hiking adventures, neighbors spied and strangers watched in stores jangle together in our heads and come so freely to our fingers that when we see the finished pieces we are often delighted."

As for the large head sculptures that have an almost Asian appearance, John explains, "We want to create a pleasant face for people to be around. A face with a peaceful expression."

(Continued on page 23)

The couple's home, studio and gardens feature creativity and artistic expression everywhere you look.





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Gumaelius *(Continued)*



Left: Robin Gumaelius inside their home.

Right: "Critters," originally created by Robin and John Gumaelius, can be seen on the sidewalks in downtown Aberdeen.

The Gumaeliuses also bring incredible technical skills to their creations. Robin explains that when the clay forms are leather hard, she paints them a solid navy blue or red underglaze.

"Then I do a quick brush sketch in black before I paint the colors. Sometimes I use a stylus to scrape through layers of paint or all the way back through to the white clay," she says. There are multiple kilns, welding equipment, and a wood mill on their property to facilitate their intricate handiworks.

In addition to the downtown Aberdeen art installation, "Critters," (see sidebar), the Gumaeliuses' creations can also be seen in Grays Harbor at the Tokeland Hotel. Outside of the county, their work is carried in these galleries:

Childhood's End Gallery,
Olympia, Wash.


Patricia Rovzar Gallery,
Seattle, Wash.

WaterWorks Gallery,
Friday Harbor, Wash.

Museo Gallery, Langley, Wash.

23 Sandy Gallery, Portland, Ore.

Hanson Howard Gallery, Ashland, Ore.

L Ross Gallery, Memphis, Tenn. 

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The Critters

Whimsical, downright distinctive and eye catching, the public art installment "Critters" is an important landmark and tourist attraction for Aberdeen. The 12 quirky metal sculptures created by Robin and John Gumaelius can be found on street corners in the downtown area.

Commissioned in 1998, the critters attract so much public interest that the city of Aberdeen has established a walking tour for people to explore and learn about them.

Spearheaded by Michael and Sylvia Dickerson from the group Our Aberdeen, the city hired talented artist Douglas Orr to repaint and restore the critters as the years have taken their toll. He, in turn, involved local auto dealer Five Star Motors, to spray a hard, clear protective coat on the sculptures to extend their life. 



Michael and Sylvia Dickerson, left, and Douglas Orr, played a role in restoring "Critters."

To view and learn about each of the critters, the walking tour can be accessed at:

www.crittersonthemap.com

GRAYS HARBOR

BOOKS



Photo by Gail Ayres

LOCAL HISTORY

Restaurateur Ralph Larson Promotes Harbor History

BY GAIL GREENWOOD AYRES

For third-generation Grays Harbor resident Ralph Larson, history has always been a passion. And, just like his passion for good food and conversation, the owner of Duffy's Restaurant in Aberdeen, relishes sharing Grays Harbor's fascinating history with others.

"My grandfather came here about 1910. My Dad was born in Aberdeen in 1915. I listened to stories of old Aberdeen all the time and was always fascinated," says Larson, 79.

After the Wishkah Cookhouse Restaurant in Aberdeen closed decades ago, Larson bought a box of local interest books for \$10 at an auction. He put them up for sale in the Hoquiam Duffy's Restaurant (which was sold years ago) and was surprised by the response. So, when the opportunity came to buy a small book distributing

business in about 1990, he jumped at the opportunity.

So now in addition to running his popular restaurant, he owns Duffy's Wholesale Books, which supplies history and local interest books to some 25 small stores primarily from the Columbia River to Forks, as well as at Duffy's Restaurant.

In fact, right after getting a whiff of freshly baked pies, visitors to Duffy's first notice rows of rare local historic books displayed behind glass shelves in the restaurant's lobby. They are available for purchase as are the more recently published local interest and history books in racks near the cashier.

Other outlets in Grays Harbor include each of the Dennis Company stores, Valu Drug and Pick Rite Thriftway in Montesano, Elma Pharmacy and East County Thriftway in Elma; Shop 'n Kart and Twin Harbor Drug in Westport;

Grayland Hardware and Forks Outfitters.

The books include those about lumber mills and logging camps, as well as the early years working at the port and fishing in the ocean. There are also stories of legends and historic figures as varied as Bigfoot, serial killer Billy Gohl, hunted outlaw John Tornow, and Kurt Cobain, lead singer and songwriter of the grunge band Nirvana. Other books include recipe books using local ingredients, information on mushroom hunting, smoking salmon, tying knots, razor clam digging, beachcombing and much more.

About once a month Larson leaves the restaurant and travels up and down the coast to talk to other business owners, swap stories and fill their book racks with the fascinating stories of Grays Harbor's rich past.

(Continued on page 25)

Harbor History *(Continued)*

For those interested in a good read about local history, Larson suggests the following (in no particular order):

“They tried to cut it all” and “The River Pioneers: Early Days on Grays Harbor,” both by Edwin Van Syckle – Published in 1980 and 1982.

“Lady on the Beach,” by Norah Berg – Published in 1952, the autobiographical book talks about living at Copalis Beach in the 1930s and 1940s.

“Kurt Cobain Journals,” (2003)


“John Tornow Villain or Victim? The Untold Story of the Wildman of the Wynooche,” by Bill Lindstrom, published in 2014. As well as “Beast Man – A Historical Account of John Tornow accused murderer of six men” by Michael Fredson (2002)

“Port of Missing Men Billy Gohl, Labor and Brutal Times in the Pacific Northwest” by Aaron Goings (2020)

“On the Harbor: From Black Friday to Nirvana” by John C. Hughes and Ryan Teague Beckwith (2010)

“Logging in Grays Harbor” by Brian Woodwick and Gene Woodwick (2014)

“Clamming The Pacific Northwest Coast” by Ken Axt (2016)

“Boys of Company B” by Ted Reynvaan (2009) – A compilation of first-hand stories of young marines from Grays Harbor who were called to duty during the Korean War. 

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A Theatrical Fleury

BY GREGORY E. ZSCHOMLER

Julayne Fleury, 32, is one of Grays Harbor's rare, native-born (her family has been here since the 1800s), consummate actresses. Always a performer, the talented thespian says, "Theater is life."

"Julayne is arguably the most talented, creative and hardworking person I know," says frequent collaborator Alex Eddy. "Our theater community, and frankly our community in general, are better because she is a part of it."

"Theater is life."
– Julayne Fleury

Growing up and attending school in Hoquiam, Julayne and her friend, Christy, performed shows at her home, charging admission to anyone who would come. "My dad would never pay because he said he owned the house," she recalls, laughing.

During middle school, Julayne performed in her first real show, "Guys and Dolls." She went on to perform in

Hoquiam High School productions and then, while attending Grays Harbor College, she continued acting, under the direction of Brad Duffy.

From GHC she went on to earn her bachelor's degree in theatrical performance from Western Washington University before returning to Grays Harbor in 2015, to practice the craft, performing in six shows that year. Since then, she has "trod the boards" (theater parlance for acting) in many a production, as well as designing sets and/or directing quite a few.

Photo by Keith Kraeger



Julayne and Justyce Brook in "Billy Elliott" at the Bishop Center, 2018.

Casey Bronson, Chaela Watkins and Julayne Fleury in "Still Life With Iris," Driftwood Players, 2017.

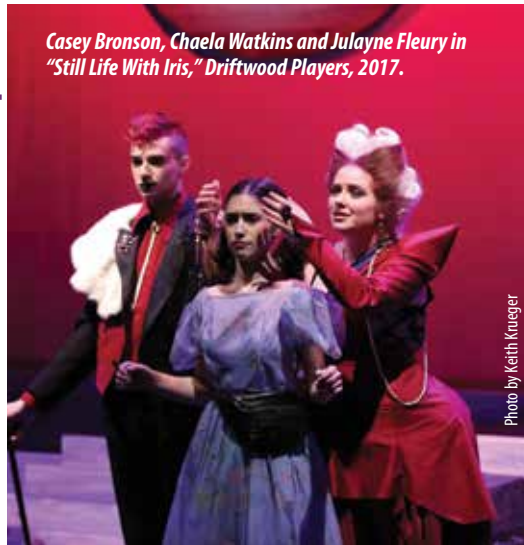


Photo by Keith Kraeger

Julayne as Sally Bowles in The Driftwood Players' 2018 production of "Cabaret."



Photo by Bri Bonnell

Julayne as Roxie Hart in "Chicago." Bishop Center, 2014.

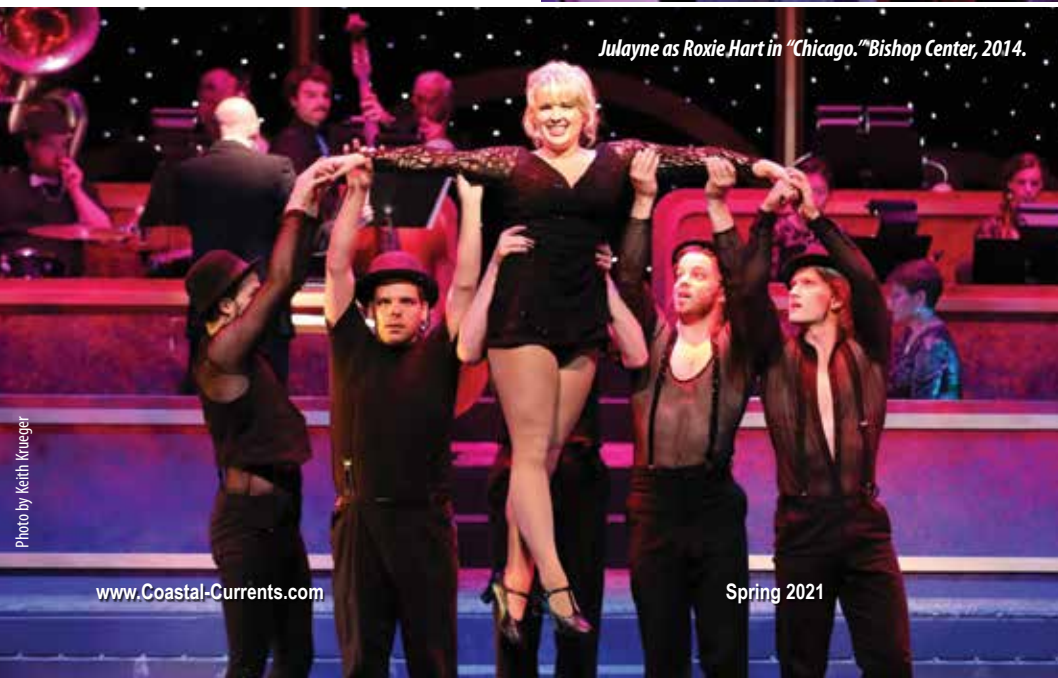


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Julayne Fleury *(Continued)*

Hi Diddly Dee, an Actor's Life for Me

"I'm pretty down if I'm not in a show," says the actress who typically acts in two to three plays or musicals, directs another and designs sets for five to seven productions per year.

Her last stage design, for Driftwood Theater's "The Gin Game," was live-streamed this past November and December. Her latest performance was as Mary Ann in "Constellations," which was also live-streamed from Driftwood Theater because of the state's Covid-19 mandates. Julayne says that acting without an audience simply isn't the same. "There were unforeseen challenges and successes. ... We had to adjust as we went."

"Constellations" was the first show she'd done since March when venues across the nation shut down. The entertainment and events industries—both here and world-wide—were the first to shutter and will likely be among the last to reopen.

Julayne directs Christian Gleason in 7th Street Kids' 2019 production of "Matilda." Maija Nordin, choreographer, is at left.

Photo by Beth Barone



Not only was Julayne's theater passion affected by the pandemic, but even the actor's stereotypical day job as a server at Rediviva restaurant in downtown Aberdeen has been put on hold due to the times.

"I really love it there," she says of the job she's held for five years. "I love the lifestyle and our clientele there is really great." She's itching to get back to work—both onstage and off.

"Doing something with people as a team with a goal," is part of the allure of theater for Julayne, who describes herself as a people person. Having to work together as a team brings people close—like a family—she says. When on stage, "You have to be thinking about what the other performer is saying and what's going on around you." That's why she loves improvisation, too: "You have to react to what you're given."

The now Aberdeen resident's favorite roles have been as the aspiring vaudevillian, Roxie Hart, in "Chicago" and as the washed up dance instructor, Mrs. Wilkinson, in "Billy Elliott."

The Show Must Go On

For the past eight years, Julayne has also been the director of the 30-year-old 7th Street Kids. The theater group had planned to produce Sondheim's musical "Into the Woods" in the summer of 2020. That production has been Covid-delayed until, hopefully, sometime this year. Under the direction of Julayne, the 7th St. Kids were, however, still able to pull off a successful virtual summer

theater camp experience in the middle of the pandemic.

The artist's attainment is likely due to her professionalism and dedication to performing. "You have to throw yourself into the role," she says. If not, "then why are you doing it? Acting is about committing." But, she says, the roles she plays are probably expressed as "fifty percent Julayne and 50 percent the character."

Opening Soon at a Theater Near You

Her new project is bigger than any she's tackled before. In February, she and fellow theatrical and musical artist, Alex Eddy, launched the all-new Plank Island Theatre Co. The first project is a no-cost monologue project, "Writing Wrongs." Auditions are set for April, with performances planned for June.

Julayne says Plank Island Theatre Company will be "filling a void for theater we don't do around the Harbor." The company, she says, is being implemented, not to compete with the wide variety of theater in the area but to fill in some of the holes – offering an even wider array of choices in the county.

The duo plans to do monologue projects and school tours, offer more children's shows and create a company that will showcase new work – especially by local playwrights – at various venues in the area. They'll workshop material and stage the new works, including their own.

Though the troupe's productions will offer a mix for adults and children, Julayne, who has a special heart for

(Continued on page 31)

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Julayne Fleury *(Continued)*

kids, says she hopes Plank Island Theater Co., will be able to offer free theater to kids as well as provide a creative outlet for them. She notes that there is a goodly talent base of more than 50 youth in the area who are itching to do more theater. The 7th St. Kids and Driftwood, which produces but one children's show a year, are not doing enough for younger players and audiences, she says.

Julayne's talents include writing. She's written a short work of fiction called "Smells like Teen Spirit" based on the 2002 burning of the Weatherwax Building at Aberdeen High School. She intends to adapt that into a stage play. Alex has nearly completed a full-length musical theater piece on historic Aberdeen serial killer Billy Ghol that they also plan to workshop. Both will likely be produced by their new theater group.

"Plank Island is a huge, exciting undertaking," says Alex, "and I can't imagine having a better partner by my side than Julayne as we tackle it together."

The illustrious Julayne Fleury is enthusiastically looking forward to this new chapter in her theater life. Meanwhile, she just wants another show. That, as well as "family, fun and an old fashioned."

To learn more about Plank Island Theatre Co., visit the website at www.plankislandtheatrecompany.com. Follow Julayne on Facebook and Instagram at [julayne_fleury](https://www.facebook.com/julayne_fleury). 



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