

PORTLAND AFOOT

PDX's 10-minute newsmagazine
on buses, bikes, and low-car life

May 2010:

THE GETAWAY ISSUE



Arriving Now

The four stories you can't miss this month



1

Tragedy

Just after 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 24, an empty #9 bus turned left into a group of 20-somethings crossing the street at NW Glisan & Broadway. Three were trapped beneath the bus; two died underneath. TriMet buses have killed 32 since 1988, but police said they'd never seen a case like this.

WHAT IT MEANS

A huge lawsuit, maybe – just what the agency needs right now. The bus driver, Sandi Day, had a green light for her turn. But the victims, police said, had a walk sign.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Support the victims' memorials:
<http://pdx.be/OldTownCrash>



2 Upset!

Bicycling magazine shocked local bikers April 6 by naming Minneapolis the best biking city in the U.S. The editor said PDX might be coasting on its past progress. "F--- Portland," one MN biker told the magazine. "All I ever hear is about how cool Portland is."

WHY WE'RE BEHIND

<http://pdx.be/Dethroned>

3 Good news

A mom and two young children were crossing 32nd Avenue in front of a #24 bus March 31 when the driver started honking furiously. They paused, confused, and a car zipped past, just feet from their noses. Their lives were saved. It turned out to be the driver's last day on the job after 29 years.

THE WHOLE STORY

<http://pdx.be/HeroicDriver>

4 Bikes v. sewers

Did bike-friendly Mayor Sam Adams blow it by claiming that \$20 million in sewer money would count as bikeway money if he spent it to build rain gardens along busy streets? It's not even a super-bikey idea, but it turns out the whole town was just waiting for a chance to blame bikers for our high sewer bills. Even the *Mercury* and a bike-riding council candidate turned on Adams over this stuff.

BLOW BY BLOW

pdx.be/RainGardenFight



Sources: *Oregonian*, *BikePortland*, *Portland Mercury*, twitter.com/PortlandAfoot



"She sat down next to me. Or I could be wrong. Either way, I didn't know what I was getting into.

"Just kind of a plain woman, middle-aged. She looked like a volunteer of some sort. I remember thinking about her: 'Something's not quite right, but she's involved in normal society somehow.' We were waiting for the bus, sitting next to each other on a bench.

"I caught the bus on what is it, 5th and Clay, I think? That lane recently went carless. But there's still a lot of cars that didn't know, weren't used to the change, and were driving in the bus's lane. This woman was

just very upset about it. She was yelling at them. She was telling me about how people should be arrested and it should be a capital offense or a felony.

"I would just kind of nod and smile, and anything I said just prompted her to go off for another half an hour. And the whole time she was ranting and raving she had this big huge chocolate bar that she was devouring. It was like she was taking her anger out on the chocolate bar.

"And she's talking with her mouth open. And it's chocolate, so it's a bit unseemly, you know.

"Everyone else was staying away, because they knew I got stuck with this woman. I don't remember if mine came first or hers, but one of us finally left."

What's your favorite bus story? Write michael@portlandafloat.org or call 503-662-2871.

She kept ranting and raving and eating more and more chocolate.

Street Talk

Five questions and someone worth asking

Later this month, when Dude A at your local TriMet stop starts *chatting about the weather*, you won't think twice. When Dude B, nearby, starts *tapping on a drum*, that won't be strange either – until the moment when Dude A, still talking to you, *breaks into song mid-sentence*. Then the next bus arrives, and the people who swing out the back door are all *singing along*.

Welcome to *Bus Stop Opera*, baby. It arrives in PDX May 14, but we couldn't wait to track down its 29-year-old mastermind.

Dawn Weleski

creative director,
Bus Stop Opera

How on earth did you come up with this?

Basically I just had this idea to do operas at bus stops. I'd dress up and I was singing from *Tosca*. People just weren't into it. They were kind of threatened. So I thought, what if I just represented their own lives to them?

That's why the lyrics your cast is performing at bus stops this month all come from conversations you already had on TriMet?

When you start talking to people on buses,

they end up telling you their story. I try as hard as I can to make it verbatim.

Is it OK to attend your shows on purpose?

Really, the primary audience for this is the people that happen to be there. I think it's much more sublime, when you expect somebody to be talking to you and then all of a sudden they're singing. But there's no use in hiding it.

You're from Pittsburgh. Any difference between riders here and there?

The mix of people is very similar. It's a lot of blue-collar workers. I have found Portland to be much more conversational. I don't know if it's the general tone of what's going on in the nation right now, but the conversations in Portland tend to be more serious.

What do you do when you wait for the bus?

Talk to people. I'm a very introverted person by nature. But through this project, I think I've come to realize the necessity of meeting other

people. When people go from point A to point B, they feel their life has stopped, or it's on pause. I like to use it as a space now, to let life take turns that I don't choose.

Bus Stop Opera is in Portland May 14-17. Shows are free at transit centers around town. Visit busstopopera.com for showtimes.



Mountain Man

Portland's last generation of hikers passed the secrets of the Columbia Gorge to Scott Parker.

To Beacon Rock and Hardy Ridge:

Skamania Transit

- Departs C-Tran Fisher's Landing TC (14 min. from Parkrose/Sumner station on TriMet Red Line), 6:15 p.m. Friday
- Ask to be dropped off at Beacon Rock State Park. Great dayhikes on Hardy Ridge.
- Ask for a pick-up 6:10 a.m. Monday
- Price: \$3 round trip

To the coast range:

Tillamook Bus

- Departs downtown Greyhound station, 10:35 a.m. Saturday
- Ask to be dropped off anywhere along Hwy 6
- Ask for a pick-up Sunday afternoon, 4 p.m.
- Price: \$15 round trip
- Just call to set it up: 503-815-8283

Scott Parker's bushwack tips

Because trails are for conformists.

- First, choose a destination. Waterfalls are good. Lay stream routes against topographical maps – steep drops are where you want to be.
- Second, look for old roads – they go places. You can tell an abandoned road by the flattening of a hillside and the alder trees that once sprouted in its sunlight.
- Third, be prepared to get totally lost.

Now, every summer, he leads cheap car-free trips into the hills in hope of passing his secrets on to you.

When the old Portland men began to tell Scott Parker about the hidden gullies and forgotten wildflower fields of the Gorge, they didn't give directions.

Only clues.

"They knew they needed to tell younger people where those trails were, or they were going to get lost – essentially die with them," Parker said, relaxing in the shade outside Portland State University's bookstore last month. "There's some waterfalls out there – they're not like Multnomah Falls, but they're as good as Horsetail Falls."

But the old men couldn't just give him directions. They knew that'd kill the magic of the Gorge.

"They found the stuff that way, right?" Parker said. "And they figured that's the way I need to do it."

Parker didn't catch the hiking bug until his 30s, but it bit hard. The former Tektronix engineer sprang for a GPS receiver and joined legendary wildflower hunter Russ Jolley and others on uncharted trips through the wilderness.

But now, Parker said, his guides are falling away, just as they knew they would.

"One of them has died," Parker said. "Another has Alzheimer's and so can't remember where all the trails are."

That's why Parker, 56, is recruiting young nature lovers that want to carry on the wisdom. (See star, upper right.)

"In general, people ought to use the same process I used," Parker said with a smile. "Meeting old guys."

Fri., May 14

11:30 am-7 pm

hike with Scott Parker
on Cape Horn Trail
bring \$3 to
Fishers Landing TC

To The Dalles:

Greyhound and Wasco County Transportation Network

- Call one day in advance to get a ride to your campsite, anywhere in Wasco County: 877-875-4657
- Depart downtown Greyhound station, 12:10 p.m. Friday, change to Wasco County Dial-A-Ride after arriving at 1:50 p.m.
- Call for a pickup in time to catch the Greyhound home on Monday, 3:55 a.m. or 2:30 p.m.
- Price: \$67.20 round trip

