



Federal government unveils plans for border crossing

All would result in removal of homes in Blaine

by CHARLES BRENDON
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BLAINE - Plans to renovate the current Peace Arch Port of Entry facility in Blaine may not be proceeding as smoothly as envisioned. The General Services Agency, a branch of the Federal Government, held a public meeting last Thursday in Blaine to explain some of the options being considered for redevelopment of the key entryway. The meeting was attended by more than 50 local area residents, many of whom will be impacted by the proposed changes.

According to Michael Levine, head of GSA operation in Whatcom County, the extensive renovation of the port is necessary for a variety of reasons. Post 9/11 concerns, safety and changed operational requirements were the chief reasons cited for the proposal.

From the current eight inbound traffic lanes from Canada, the GSA proposal envisions 10 lanes, which is projected to manage CBP (Customs and Border Patrol) traffic

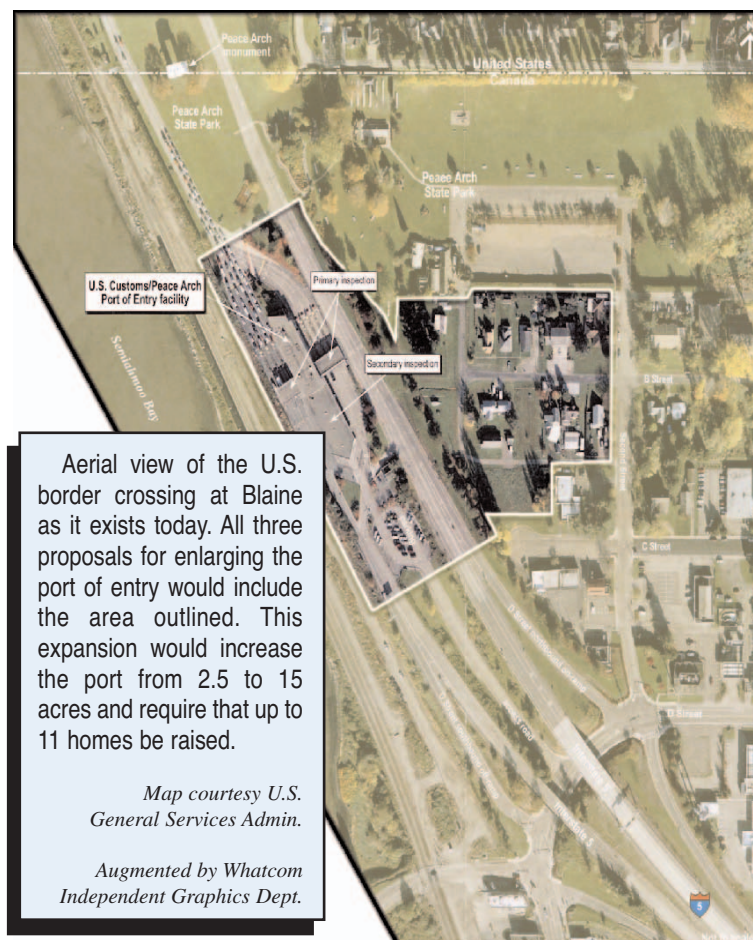
projections for several decades to come. Three different designs for a new building and parking have made it to the design stage, and the highlights of each alternative were discussed at the meeting. If implemented, the renovation will more than quintuple the amount of land the port currently occupies, from 2.5 acres to as many as 15 acres. Although this requirement will not impinge on the Peace Arch Park, nor the parking lot currently adjoining the Park, the expansion would require the expropriation of up to eleven homeowners' properties, as well as a number of commercial properties.

The proposed redevelopment has been underway since April 1999, and last Thursday's meeting was the fourth since that date. Although comments were heard and responded to by GSA representatives on Thursday, no formal written record was made of the meeting.

The new Port of Entry designs would incorporate a number of innovative features, including a covered area that would allow

Customs Officers to inspect Canada-bound vehicles. Although it is rarely done, the right to inspect outbound vehicles is part of CBP's mandate. One of the options under consideration calls for the north-bound lanes of I-5 to be built over a new building, in effect creating a stack of usable office space capped by four lanes of freeway. Contrary to some published reports, neither the Ranger's station nor the Park cottage, currently located on Peace Arch Park land, would be compromised.

Barbara Campagna, a GSA Officer involved with the historic and preservation aspects of the proposal also addressed the crowd and reiterated that there would be no adverse effect on any historical monument or structure, or on any existing view corridors. According to her, none of the houses under consideration for expropriation qualify as historic, according to definitions in the Federal Act governing National Historic sites. If the project proceeds, test archeological digs, called test shovel pits,



Aerial view of the U.S. border crossing at Blaine as it exists today. All three proposals for enlarging the port of entry would include the area outlined. This expansion would increase the port from 2.5 to 15 acres and require that up to 11 homes be raised.

Map courtesy U.S. General Services Admin.

Augmented by Whatcom Independent Graphics Dept.

will commence within two to three months, and will include the involvement of three local Indian tribes, including the Semi-Ah-Moo tribe from British Columbia.

Opposition to the entire proposal

centered on the expropriation aspects of the plan. Many of the eleven homeowners who would be most affected by the construction

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Court allows the *Bellingham Weekly* a last gasp

Developers may have been negotiating to help finance the paper

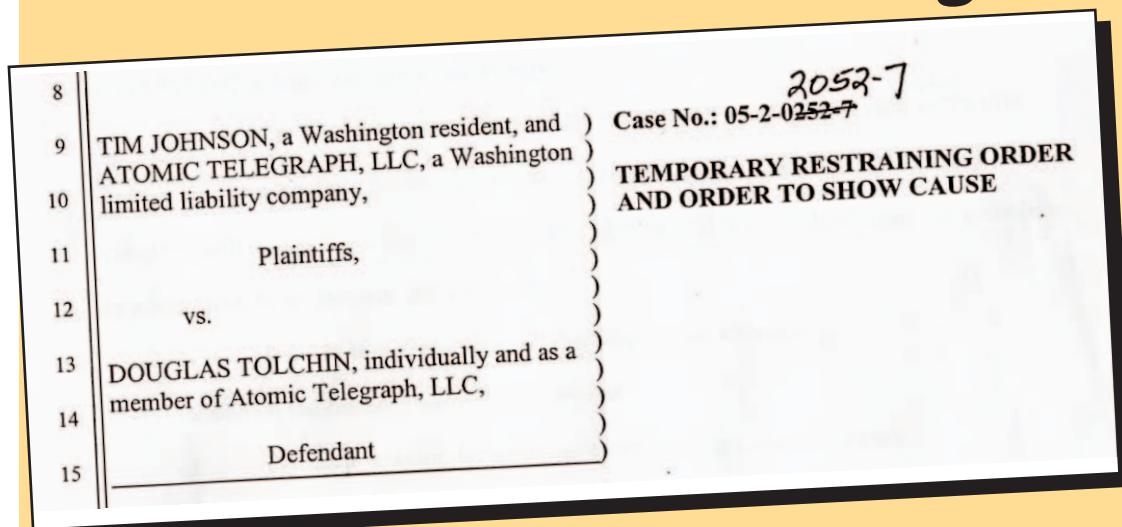
by SHERI WARD
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BELLINGHAM - In a heated Superior Court hearing on Thursday before Judge Charles Snyder, the court offered the Bellingham Weekly one last way to continue publishing.

On Tuesday afternoon, Doug Tolchin, a local developer and majority owner of the paper, had

told employees the paper would close and there would be no issue this week. He then called the printer and told them he would not be responsible for any further debts. Editor Tim Johnson, in the meantime, produced an issue off-site and was prepared to print it this week. The subject of the court hearing was to issue a restraining order to Tolchin so this week's paper could

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— The China Communique —



Christmas in China

by LARRY KLEPINGER
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Earlier this year, 2004 Congressional Candidate Larry Klepinger moved to Fujian province in China and accepted a teaching position at Fuzhou University. The WI has invited him to write a series of articles communicating what is really happening in China— through the eyes of a casual observer — without the major media spin. You can contact Larry via email at larry@larryklepinger.com. Or visit his website www.larryklepinger.com for more information.

FUJIAN PROVINCE, CHINA - I was having lunch with a Chinese professor a few days ago and he made a very interesting comment. "Rapid change in China comes very slowly."

When taken on the surface it seems to make sense. Then again,

But there is a genuine feeling from my students, and a lot of my Chinese friends, who want to know how to celebrate Christmas, to know what it's really all about, to experience the joy of what is actually becoming a worldwide celebration.

when you look at the breakneck speed at which China is trying to modernize it makes you wonder if that statement is any longer true.

On October 1, 1949, the Chinese Communists took over mainland China and drove Chaing Kai-shek into exile on the island of Formosa, later to be renamed Taiwan.

During the ensuing Communist

regime there were many ups and downs: the Great Leap Forward; Nixon's historic visit to "open up" China to the outside world in 1972; Deng's famous statement that, "To be rich is glorious;" the Chinese students' protest for democracy in 1989 in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, that was ruthlessly crushed by the government; the WTO recently admitting China as a member nation; and the on-going "rapid" progression of China's climb up the international ladder of leadership and prestige.

But one thing that has really been changing in China in the past few years is the all-embracing celebration of Christmas. It was just a little over 56 years ago that the Chinese Communist government was persecuting — and executing — Christians en masse. To me, Christmas in China is an astonishing turnaround of gigantic proportions — not to mention the cultural identity of the Chinese people being infringed upon.

But don't get the wrong idea. It isn't viewed as a Christian celebration in the religious sense of the word, but a celebration of the heart. On a recent walk with Akiko in downtown Fuzhou — a city with a 2,000-year history — people were out Christmas shopping, couples walking arm in arm, giggling as they sipped Pepsi Cola, greeting my wife and I with a friendly "Merry Christmas." Imagine,

door with students grinning from ear to ear going to various Christmas parties, Wal-Mart selling plastic Christmas trees, Christmas lights and decorations galore everywhere.

But there are those here who belittle this development with a sneer and a condescending comment. Many deride the Chinese for the way they have commercialized the whole concept. "They are in it for the money," is a common refrain from many of the foreigners who pass through just long enough to become "experts" on everything about China.

Granted, they might have a point about the crass commercialism. But there is a genuine feeling from my students, and a lot of my Chinese friends, who want to know how to celebrate Christmas, to know what it's really all about, to experience the joy of what is actually becoming a worldwide celebration. And, after all, isn't that what Christ was all about — spreading peace and love throughout the world? Seems like it is working pretty well here in China.

And China is not the only place that celebrates Christmas in Asia. The Japanese are just as enthused, as are the Koreans. And just for the record, approximately 40 percent of the Korean population is Christian.

But whether it is religious based or not isn't the point. Christ was not a Christian — He was a Jew. Organized religion was not His mission. Spreading the concept of love was. It is sad that this point is lost on so many who vehemently profess to be Christian but, in reality, fall very far of the mark.

In my opinion Christmas here in China is giving the Chinese people a chance to relax and enjoy life, while at the same time being afforded the opportunity to give a little of themselves without feeling embarrassed about doing so. In essence, sharing with those who are less fortunate than they are.

On our way back to the university my wife and I noticed something that drove this point home with humble clarity.

All the beggars' cups were full. From China, here's wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. ♦WI

Bicycle laws updated

Rules spell out rules of the road for motorists

by ANASTASIA TIETJE
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COUNTY- Bicycling is a way of life for many people in the area. College students use bikes to get around campus. People go mountain biking on our many trails, or take bicycling road trips even on narrow and windy roads such as Chuckanut Drive. Motorists and bicyclists alike are sometimes confused about the rules of the road, so it comes as welcome news that the state has a couple of new provisions to clarify just what those rules are:

1. A motorist must give a bicyclist a minimum of three-foot clearance on the left when passing, and a five-foot clearance if passing at a higher speed.
2. A motorist cannot pass a slower vehicle on a two-lane road if a bicyclist or pedestrian is present in the opposite lane.
3. The zone of legal protection for bicyclists and pedestrians now includes highway shoulders and bicycle lanes, which was previously a legal no-man's land.

These new provisions are

statewide and were in effect as of July 1. The law stems from a tragic 2004 Mother's Day accident near Walla Walla, in which a car passing a cattle truck hit and killed a bicyclist in the opposite lane.

"Bicyclists and pedestrians are very happy that this law passed," Kim Brown, transportation options coordinator for the City of Bellingham, said. "It doesn't seem to me to be a controversial law in that it's only asking vehicles to provide the same protection to a cyclist as another motorist."

A bicyclist has to obey the same laws of the road as a motorist. Bicyclists can be pulled over for failing to stop at stop signs or not signaling before changing direction. These new provisions have been made to protect the increasing numbers of bike riders, but bicyclists also need to be safe on the roadways, and protect themselves. Bicyclists should be especially aware of wearing bright colors and using lights at night to increase their visibility. Brown said the Bellingham Bicycle Advisory Committee will be working to promote and educate cyclists, pedestrians and motorists on the new provisions. ♦WI

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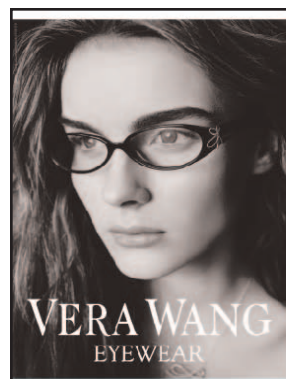
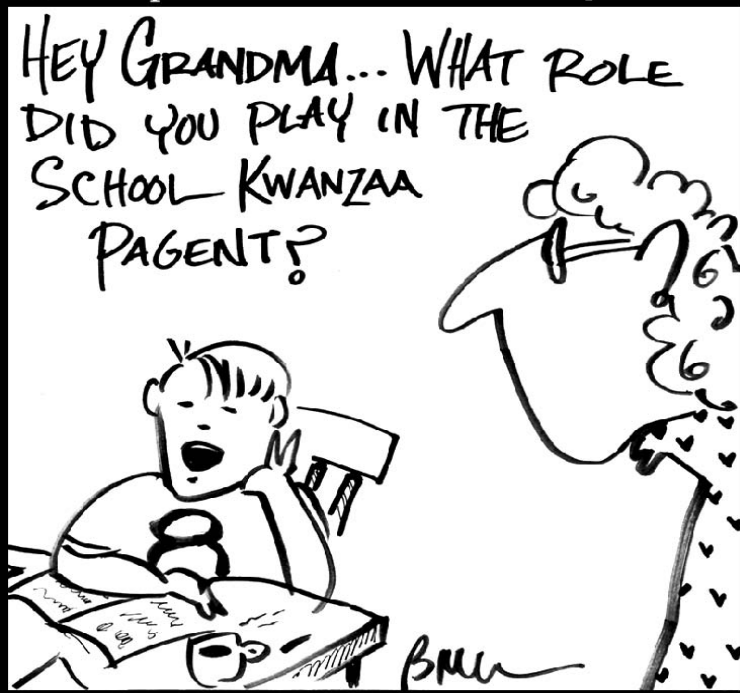
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