

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST DELIVERS PATRONS AND A PICK-ME-UP

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NEW YORK - "Yankee Doodle came to New York, just to eat at restaurants."

That's not the musical accompaniment usually heard in the lobby of the Waldorf-Astoria, where pianist Daryl Sherman plays jazz standards worthy of Cole Porter's former residence. But that serenade by Jack Kostel, materials acquisition coordinator for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, reflected the sunny attitude that 950 residents of Oregon brought to New York for the Columbus Day weekend.

"It's a little like sugar shock. I'm not used to this," said Veronica Jaeger, who works in the Waldorf's business center. Her comments were as much a reflection on the visitors as her fellow employees, who lined the hotel's staircase and applauded a group of Oregonians when they arrived Friday, an idea that originated with the staff.

That good will is being repeated again and again in encounters this weekend between New Yorkers, grateful for both the economic and spiritual support from outsiders, and Oregonians, eager to show their concern for the Big Apple.

"Flight For Freedom," as the trip is dubbed, is uncontestedly the largest group to respond to New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's plea for tourism, according to Amy Solomonson, a spokeswoman for the city's visitors bureau. A 50-member Jamaican tour group, made up of political and business leaders, ranks second.

"It's not just the numbers of people, it's the type of people," said New York native Jack McGowan, executive director of Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism. While many corporate and government leaders are flying in from Oregon, more than 90 percent of travelers are average folks.

The project is the brainchild of Sho Dozono, chairman of the Portland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and head of the Azumano travel agency. After assembling a volunteer team of business and community leaders, Dozono announced the trip Sept. 26. They expected 200 takers for the last-minute, 3,500-mile journey, but by the following Monday, the books closed with 750 confirmed reservations and more requests in the system. Dozono's agency is taking no commissions.

There are few group outings, but shopping, the theater, the Staten Island Ferry, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art are on nearly everyone's to-do list. Recognizing the event that looms over the trip, some also plan to view the World Trade Center wreckage.

As with most group members, price (beginning at \$379, plus tax, for round-trip airfare and two nights at the Waldorf) was not the prime incentive for retired Portland schoolteacher Patty Deines; supporting New York with her dollars was.

"In Oregon, we like to say we have this pioneer spirit," she said. "We'll fly all the way across the United States to show we care what these people have been through."

Traveling alone is an act of courage for Deines, who is making her first journey to New York instead of eating granola in the woods on a hunting trip with her husband.

For Jeannie Northstar, a jeweler who came with the man she divorced 12 years ago, the weekend will be filled with visits to retailers such as Tiffany and Cartier. "New York is where the best people work," she said. "Already, I've seen better craftsmanship than there is in Portland."

Via corporate sponsorship, US Representative David Wu of Oregon, the first Chinese-American congressman, is hosting dinner tonight for everyone in Chinatown, which has been hit hard by the tragedy. Tomorrow night, Broadway cast members will perform at a reception in the Waldorf's Starlight Room.

Portland's mayor, Vera Katz, will lead the Oregon contingent in New York's Columbus Day Parade, exactly 60 years after she and her family arrived in Manhattan after fleeing Nazi Germany. She will also lay a wreath in Union Square following a remembrance ceremony.

Patricia Crauh of Vancouver, Wash., across the Columbia River from Portland, is checking out her old stomping ground. Born and bred in New York, she walked through Midtown, stopping at Grand Central Station, where she attended secretarial school "1,000 years ago."

Clad in white "Oregon Loves NY" T-shirts, Crauh and her niece Colleen Kruse weren't exactly inconspicuous. "People came up to us and shook our hands and thanked us for coming. Even the ones who didn't come up to us would wave or smile," she said. "This has really affected me."

Anecdotally, business seems to be picking up, but the loss of tourist revenue has been huge. From Sept. 11 to 22, the city lost a total of \$163.7 million in visitor spending, according to the visitors bureau. New York's restaurant association reports losses of \$20 million daily. Hotel occupancy rates, normally around 89.5 percent during this, their busiest season, has climbed from an immediate post-Sept. 11 level of around 40 percent to about 65 percent, said Joseph E. Spinnato, president of the Hotel Association of New York City.

"This contingent is an emotional reassurance for shaken New Yorkers as well," he said. "It's just a boost that everybody needs."

For others, the weekend's highlight may have nothing to do with sightseeing. After 16-year-old Cameron Platt told his parents he would pay his own way, the family decided to make the trip.

In the Waldorf lobby, they met attorney Lisa Sokoloff, one of about 9,000 New Yorkers whose Battery Park City neighborhood near the World Trade Center was devastated by the blast. Sokoloff is living in the Waldorf until her apartment building is deemed safe.

As the Platts listened, Sokoloff recounted her escape from the Trade Center, including being surrounded by an opaque black cloud of debris, and negotiating fences and ladders to reach a fireboat to New Jersey, where she walked to the nearest hospital for eye treatment.

They had flown in to support New York and spend money, said Mary Platt, an occupational therapist, but they also hoped to connect with New Yorkers in some way.

Sokoloff's story, she said, "is what we came for."