

PREFACE

MARK SCOTT

During my tenure as president and CEO of Mid-Columbia Medical Center, I would often leave my office at the end of a long day and jump on my bike for a ride along the back roads of The Dalles.

Just a few blocks away from MCMC, you can turn onto Scenic Drive and head up the hill toward Sorosis Park. I would stop there often to take in the spectacular panoramic view of The Dalles — the tree-lined neighborhoods below, then the historic downtown and, just beyond that, the beautiful, but imposing, Columbia River.

On most of these early evenings, the Columbia River Gorge's famous east wind would be blowing; it's a rare day in The Dalles when there's not at least a breeze.

I remember one day in particular, stopping at the top of the hill in front of the park and straddling my bike, just to unwind a little while taking in the scenery. The waters of the Columbia were especially choppy on this day; the river was really churning. As I watched the wind kicking up the whitecaps, suddenly my thoughts turned to Lewis and Clark, the explorers who nearly 200 years earlier had passed through The Dalles toward the end of the greatest expedition in the history of this country.

I found myself wondering what it must have been like for the brave members of the Corps of Discovery negotiating the infamous Long and Short Narrows (Grandes Dalles de la Columbia) for which The Dalles was named.

In his journal, Clark wrote apprehensively about the prospect of guiding canoes through what would be the most dangerous stretch of the Columbia River the Corps would encounter:

“The whole of the Current of this great river must at all Stages pass thro' this narrow chanel of 45 yards wide. As the portage of our canoes over this high rock would be impossible... accordingly I deturmined to

pass through this place notwithstanding the horrid appearance of this agitated gut Swelling, boiling and whorling in every direction (which from the top of the rock did not appear as bad as when I was in it).”

As I stood there within eyeshot of where these explorers successfully came ashore in one piece, I was awestruck by the courage it took to be one of those explorers — to be part of a team setting out on a journey with virtually no idea what they would encounter. To be a Lewis or Clark cutting a path across a continent or a Magellan setting out around the world, guided only by primitive maps with foreboding drawings of dragons indicating the end of man’s exploration to that point. Or, to be any of the scores of other explorers possessed of the courage to be first to venture into the unknown.

And now it occurred to me that exploration was the perfect metaphor for the transformation then underway at Mid-Columbia Medical Center. At this moment in time, we were a few years into our efforts to dramatically improve the hospital experience for our patients.

Though we faced no danger other than failure, the journey our organization set out on in the late 1980s certainly required a leap of faith by our own corps of intrepid explorers.

When we took up the challenge of becoming the first hospital to implement the Planetree concept of care organization-wide, none of us completely understood what lay ahead. But we knew that the journey had the potential to change us all dramatically and, in the process, help us discover a new and, we felt, better model of care for our community.

It took the courage of an entire organization, and many others from outside of it, to accomplish what we had up to the point of that bike ride to Sorosis Park. And on that windy day on the hill it occurred to me that perhaps Lewis and Clark had left something behind when they passed through The Dalles on their way to the Pacific Ocean. Whether it was some of their DNA or just the spirit of being the first to try something, without any promise of success, I knew their same spirit of exploration was alive and well at MCMC.

In the years since, the organization has continued to venture where other hospitals have not, continually pushed forward by people with the courage to enter uncharted waters.