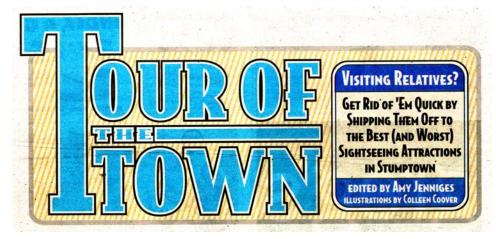# the Portland MERCURY

QUACK ON THE RIVER

I've been staring at that old bastard for months now. Sometimes I think it's taunting me. "Listen, you live right on my banks and you never come in me. I am the Willamette River. You love rivers. Come to me." It's the old allure of sea and boats and all-things nautical, and growing up as a kid with parents in the commercial fishing business, I have it bad. But until now, the closest I'd been to the Willamette was one cold day last winter when I climbed a fence and sat down along the banks to toss in rocks and drink wine.

Then I took the **Portland Duck Tour**, an amphibious land-and-water ride through the streets of Portland, down a boat ramp, into the river, then back to town again. The 40-foot "duck boat" is an aluminum, foam-hulled Hydra Terra (none of these old WWII DUKW troop transports that a lot of tours use.) It picks you up (and 45 fellow passengers) at the Convention Center, rolls through downtown, drives into the Willamette, then motors up to St. Johns, with a cut through North Portland. You can take a "puddle jumper" tour (which is an

TOUR OF THE TOWN

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hour plus change), or you can do what I did and get the big ——two-and-a-half hours of wind and sun and in-depth Willamette-watching. The tour is narrated by a guide, who gives a solid local history spiel, and the boat is captained by a Coast Guard-certified pilot. It's a very clean, squared away, legit deal; good for families, but just as interesting to anyone who wants to just sit low in the river, smell all the river smells, see all the river

birds, and cruise around a while. Plus, everyone receives a Portland Duck Tour "Quacker"—a duck-shaped noisemaker you wear around your neck. And you'd have to be "quackers" not to take one! QUACK!!! ADAM GNADE

Portland Ducks, 877-GO-BY-DUCK, portlandducks.com, 2.5 hour tour: Fri-Sun, 1:30 pm, $25; 75-minute tour: Fri-Sat, 11:30 am, $20 ∎