FORT VANCOUVER AGAIN WELCOMES NEW CITIZENS

30 take citizenship oath at historic site that attracted workers from around globe

By TOM VOGT
Columbian staff writer

Tears fell from her eyes when Gloria Robuyo Trujillo heard the "Star Spangled Banner."

It had just become her own national anthem.

Trujillo and 29 other new Americans took the oath of citizenship on the Van-
couver Barracks parade grounds Friday morning in a special ceremony.

"It's very exciting," said Trujillo, who has lived in the Portland area for 10
years. "It's been a very long road."

Trujillo came here from Spain, one of 15 foreign
nations that, as the oath of allegiance put it, were absolutely and entirely re-
nounced and abjured by these newly initiated America-
cans.

The group featured some families, including a couple
of husband and wife combi-
nations.

One of the people who welcomed the group went
through this herself. Guest
speaker Lida Leisunlin was born in Russia. Now an
18-year-old Clark College
student, Leisunlin also is
a National Park Service sea-
sonal guide.

She offered a history les-
son as she discussed the
outcome. The Fort Van-
couver National Site.

"You are part of a long
tradition," she told the new
contingent of Americans.

The Hudson's Bay Com-
pany brought workers from
around the world to Fort
Vancouver, and many of
them remained here, choos-
ing to become citizens of
this new country, Leisun-
lin said.

While the historic
grounds have long been a

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Zoya Baby of Vancouver takes a photo of husband Andrej Baby, left, and their son Ilya Baby after they became U.S. citizens Friday morning on the parade grounds of Fort Vancouver National Site. The Baby family came to the U.S. from the European nation of Georgia.

Citizens:

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portal to this country, the event was the first naturalization ceremony in Southwest Washington, said Evelyn Sahli, a federal official from Portland.

Her agency, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, is partnering with the National Park Service on 24 citizenship ceremonies across the United States.

Naturalization ceremonies typically are done in a courthouse or an agency office, Sahli said. But candidates in this area had an opportunity to participate in a special observance of Citizenship Week.

Another event Friday took place at the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, known more formally as the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

In a few days, other immigrants will take the oath beneath a 3,000-year-old sequoia tree at Sequoia National Park, on the rim of the Grand Canyon and on the Civil War battlefield at Vicksburg.

"These historic and picturesque sites provide an ideal backdrop for citizenship ceremonies, where new citizens can learn about and reflect on American identity and the responsibilities of citizenship," said a park service news release.

Fort Vancouver is the only National Park Service site in the Portland-Vancouver area.

Trujillo said she could have taken the citizenship oath in a routine bureaucratic setting in Portland, but she liked the thought of becoming an American on the historic site.

"I would love to do this again on a regular basis," said Tracy Fortmann, superintendent of the Fort Vancouver National Site.

The new Americans were reminded of some of the benefits and obligations of citizenship. The packets containing their naturalization certificates included voter registration cards.

And Fortmann reminded them: "As Americans, you now are owners of our national parks."

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