

Ride: Journey to end in Idaho

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summer and fall Chinook salmon are listed as threatened, likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. In 2015, the sockeye run was particularly hit by low snowpack and warm waters, very few making it back to upriver spawning grounds.

Spradley said the trio, from agricultural backgrounds themselves, are trying to be balanced in their awareness campaign about the plight of salmon, which connects the entire region. "As a human race, I think we're pretty intelligent, and if we can quit arguing, we can actually come up with a solution that would benefit the salmon and maintain our livelihood," she said.

Dam argument

In May, U.S. District Court Judge Michael Simon ruled the current salmon recovery plan violated the Endangered Species Act by not doing enough to protect 13 listed Columbia River Basin species of salmon and steelhead. Setting off a regional debate, Simon said the removal of one or more of the Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite dams on the lower Snake River in Washington should be considered in a new recovery plan.

The dams produce about 5 percent of the Pacific Northwest's power, passage for agricultural barges upriver to Lewiston, Idaho, and irrigation for local farmers. Billions have been spent on salmon recovery and retrofitting dams to improve fish passage, but many still see the Snake River dams as a major impediment to upriver fish populations. In March, Simon ordered dam managers to start spilling more water over those and four other dams to aid with salmon passage starting in spring 2018.



Photos by Damian Mullinix/For The Daily Astorian
ABOVE: Kat Cannell and Katelyn Spradley ride their horses up through an Astoria neighborhood Tuesday during their Ride for Redd, an effort to raise awareness about Idaho's endangered salmon populations. **BELOW:** Katelyn Spradley and Kat Cannell are making a Ride for Redd to bring attention to endangered salmon populations.



"We're not anti-dam," Cannell said. "We want to make that really clear to people. We're not attacking the Columbia dams, but the Snake dams ... were kind of the nail in the coffin for Idaho salmon."

Idaho Rivers

The riders are directing people to Idaho Rivers United, a nonprofit focused on restoring the state's rivers and fish runs. The nonprofit was formed in 1991, the same year

sockeye salmon were listed as endangered.

Greg Stahl, a spokesman for the nonprofit, said at least half of what the nonprofit does focuses on re-establishing salmon runs in Idaho.

Stahl said a combination of overfishing and pollution hurt Idaho's salmon. "But the biggest hit was the dams,"

The ride is also being documented by a film crew. Cannell, a photographer, said the hope is to produce a document-

tary, "Redd," about the ride.

Why horses?

At an average 3 mph, the three could go as fast on foot as on horseback, and faster on a bicycle. But they said the more usual forms of cross-country travel wouldn't draw as much attention.

"Horses, when you walk down the road, people flock to you," Cannell said. "People come up to you like, 'What are you doing? Where are you going?' What's on your horses?" They ask you a bazillion questions. If we were just walking down the road in tennis shoes with a backpack on, nobody would stop and ask us that."

Spradley said that if they had walked with backpacks, some people might write them off as hippies, whereas horses bring people from different social backgrounds together.

"One thing MJ, our riding partner said, was 'We couldn't find a salmon big enough to ride, so we decided to ride horses,'" Cannell said.

Zaitz: 'If you have a big story, you pour everything into it'

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The Enterprise has a print circulation of about 1,400. It's drawn national attention in recent weeks for its successful battle against a state agency that repeatedly denied Zaitz access to public records involving a 49-year-old man who kidnapped his son and first wife, and then was held at the Oregon State Hospital or was released under state medical supervision for 20 years.

Within a month of his release last December, Anthony Montwheeler was accused of fatally stabbing a different ex-wife, Annita Harmon, of Weiser, outside an Ontario gas station. He also stands accused in the death of Vale resident David Bates, who was killed in a head-on crash police say was caused by Montwheeler while he was fleeing police in January.

"(Bates) and his wife were driving to work, like we all do, and he ended up dying," said Enterprise reporter John Braese. The couple worked at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Ontario. Bates' wife, Jessica, was seriously injured but has since been released.

Harmon was on her way to work at the Dickinson Frozen Food plant near Fruitland that morning when she was kidnapped. Her body was found in Montwheeler's truck after the collision.

"I guess the question we're going to keep asking is: Why was he (Montwheeler) allowed out? Why was he allowed so much freedom after kidnapping and threatening the life of a child?" said Harmon's sister, Stacey Harmon-Roeber.

To answer that, Zaitz and his team turned to the records.

Shocking details

Circuit Court records from the 1996 kidnapping in Baker County contained a clue: evidence that Montwheeler might have been faking his mental illness.

They were able to obtain some, but not all, of the records they sought from the Psychiatric Security Review Board, which supervises those who successfully assert an insanity defense to a criminal charge in Oregon. One key item turned over was audio from Montwheeler's discharge hearing, when he revealed his scam to stunned board members.

"I was using this as a teachable moment on how to background someone. I was showing these guys (two reporters) how to use court records to profile this man accused of horrific crimes," said Zaitz.

In the process, he broke a 3,000-word story in late March about how Montwheeler faked mental illness for 20 years to avoid going to prison for seven.

Widely read

Zaitz tapped his former colleagues at The Oregonian to edit the complex story. The Portland-based paper co-published it online and in print, and the Statesman and other Boise-area media picked it up as well, bringing the story to a wider audience in both states.

The Enterprise sought more records, but the review board — citing health care privacy concerns — balked. Oregon's attorney general sided with the small paper on an appeal, writing that public interest in Montwheeler's case far outweighed any privacy exemptions, not all of which even applied to start with.

The review board then took the very rare step — and one of its few allowed options under Oregon code — of suing the Enterprise rather than releasing the documents, which were 15 of the exhibits from Montwheeler's discharge hearing.

Public plea

In a public plea for donations to cover the paper's attorney fees, Zaitz noted that the review board had hired high-paid private attorneys to press its case. That really upset some local readers.

"That's our taxpayer money — used to stop us from being able to know what happened," said Tracy Landreth, owner of Vale's Miracle Eatery.

Gov. Kate Brown intervened earlier this month, pressuring the state agency to drop its lawsuit. The board conceded and released the records, which among other things showed that at least two state-employed doctors suspected

early on that Montwheeler was faking mental illness to stay out of prison. Those suspicions, Zaitz noted, apparently weren't acted on.

"Access to public records is a basic tool that reporters use to keep the public informed about what their government is doing, and the idea that a state agency would sue a small weekly newspaper to try to prevent that access is appalling," said Betsy Russell, president of the Idaho Press Club and co-founder of Idahoans for Openness in Government.

Landreth and others said the death of David Bates, a well-known father of five, hit the Vale community hard. More than 1,000 people turned out to his funeral, according to the Rev. Phil Abbott of Vale Christian Church.

Abbott said that even though it is hard on Bates' family to keep reading about

the incident, he is grateful for the investigative work the paper has done to get answers — and possibly prevent future unnecessary deaths.

"I appreciated them being willing and able to stick their neck out," Abbott said. "They just want the truth to come out. That's what we want as well."

With a background in health care, Harmon-Roeber knows the tension between private and public records and said she is a big believer in privacy laws. She didn't want to comment specifically on the Enterprise's battle for records without knowing what they contained, but said her family generally supports efforts to track public officials' actions.

"We feel that any reporting that sheds light, or gives attention to, the poor choices that put anyone in danger is a good thing," she said.

Zaitz plans to return all the legal-fee donations, all made to the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. He didn't know how much money was raised toward his \$20,000 goal, and the association didn't respond to a request for that information.

Home on the ranch

Zaitz is the son of a newspaperman who worked on weeklies and dailies all over the country before settling in Oregon. His dad also owned some Oregon weeklies.

Zaitz and his wife, Scotta Callister, a former editor at The Oregonian and the Blue Mountain Eagle in John Day, bought and ran the Keizer-times (based in Keizer) in 1987. He returned to The Oregonian in 2000, and with his younger brother, Lyndon, he and Callister bought the Mal-

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Georgia House race down to two candidates, plus Trump, Pelosi

DUNWOODY, Ga. — A Georgia congressional election in a historically conservative district is headed to a runoff that raises the stakes in an early measure for President Donald Trump and both major parties ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

Democrat Jon Ossoff, a 30-year-old former congressional staffer, fell a few percentage points shy of an outright victory amid an 18-candidate scramble in Georgia's 6th Congressional District. Republican Karen Handel, a former Georgia secretary of state, finished a distant second, qualifying for the June 20 runoff.

The winner will succeed Republican Tom Price, who resigned the seat to join Trump's administration as health secretary. But the matchup in greater Atlanta's northern suburbs is just as much about Ossoff and Handel acting as proxies for the nation's roiled political atmosphere.

Leaders in both major parties agree the race offers a prime test run for 2018 elections, because the affluent, well-educated Georgia district is replete with the kind of voters Democrats must attract to reclaim a House majority and win more gubernatorial and Senate races.

For Democrats, Ossoff's near win in such a district — a Republican has held the seat since 1979, and Price won 62 percent of the vote in November — encourages the opposition movement that has flourished since Trump's election. Yet falling short also highlights the party's lingering power deficit in Washington and around the country.

US VP Pence warns North Korea: 'The sword stands ready'

YOKOSUKA, Japan — From the wind-swept deck of a massive aircraft carrier, Vice President Mike Pence today warned North Korea not to test the resolve of the U.S. military, promising it would make an "overwhelming and effective" response to any use of conventional or nuclear weapons.

Pence, dressed in a green military jacket, said aboard the hulking USS Ronald Reagan that President Donald Trump's administration would continue to "work diligently" with allies like Japan, China and other global powers to apply economic and diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang. But he told the sailors, "as all of you know, readiness is the key."

"The United States of America will always seek peace but under President Trump, the shield stands guard and the sword stands ready," Pence told 2,500 sailors wearing blue fatigues and Naval baseball caps on a sunny, windy morning aboard the carrier at the U.S. Yokosuka naval base in Tokyo Bay.

"Those who would challenge our resolve or readiness should know, we will defeat any attack and meet any use of conventional or nuclear weapons with an overwhelming and effective American response," Pence said.

The vice president said the U.S. would honor its alliance with Pacific Rim nations and protect freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the sea lanes vital to global shipping where China has been staking claim to disputed territory.

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