

State chases big items to bring tourism bucks

OUR OPINION: If it's big, Oregon stumbles all over itself to obtain it

Welcome to Oregon, land of some really big stuff.

Although Texas has nothing to worry about as the state that boasts of larger-than-life everything, it seems Oregon has been trying its best to compete.

We have Bigfoot, big mountains with big forests, big cowboys who go to big Monster Truck shows in their own big-wheeled trucks (with big gun racks), wearing big hats. We have big education cuts, big controversies, and even big politician Gordon Smith (he's tall).

Remember Howard Hughes' "Spruce Goose"? That monstrous seaplane (the largest in the known universe) has always had an aversion to actually flying — who cares? It's BIG.

The Goose used to live in Southern California next to the big and famous luxury cruise ship, the Queen Mary. Apparently, enough Oregon aviation enthusiasts and corporate sponsors collected the necessary big bags of money and put together a successful bid to bring the big bird to the Northwest.

Recently, after months of methodically taking the airplane apart and carefully transporting it up the West Coast, the Goose was given a new home in McMinnville, Ore. The move was, well, a big one.

But why bring it up here?

Well, tourism, and obviously a desire by some Oregonians to attract attention to our state by bringing in as many huge and oddball things as is physically (and financially) possible.

This brings us to 1996 and

Oregon's current (and gigantic) water-based acquisition, a behemoth killer whale named Keiko.

Keiko, the Hollywood star of *Free Willy* and *Free Willy 2*, became an overnight celebrity and animal rights poster child after it was discovered that the mammal was actually quite sick and living in less-than-ideal conditions in Mexico City.

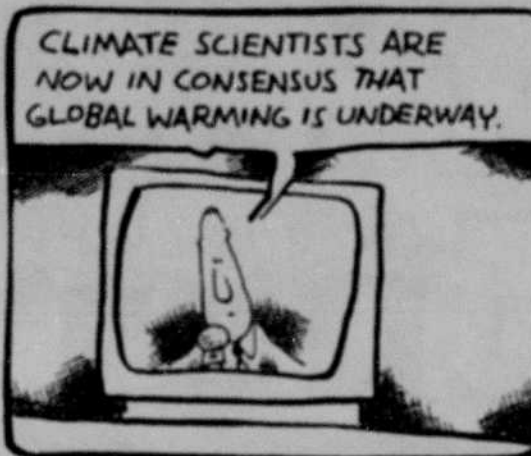
Regardless of how pathetic the poor black-and-white whale must feel, we wonder about the statistical chances of successfully rehabilitating him.

We hope Keiko's health can be restored during his outpatient stay in Newport, but we also wonder what kind of bewildering questions might be going through the amiable orca's mind.

"What fun! I still have this never-say-die low-grade fever and upset stomach, and now they're gonna send me up to some place called Ory-gon. Great! Why can't anyone just take the hint that all I need is a fresh sea lion dinner, and the heat turned down in this hot tub!"

"I have had it up to my blowhole with this Mexican sauna. Maybe these humans up north will know how to read a temperature gauge and understand that as a cold water mammal, I NEED TO BE IN COLD WATER TO SURVIVE!"

After an airplane ride aboard a big UPS airplane, Keiko is now happily swimming about in a brand new \$7 million pool (yes, it's big). What Oregon needs now is the Lochness Monster, an NFL team with big players, another big movie with big stars, a dead alien with a big head, a big ...



Capitol kitchen: Hillary takes the heat

I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies." These were the sarcastic words of a defiant Hillary Rodham Clinton during the 1992 election. Angered by the nation's assumption that she would be another quiet, doting spouse, Clinton made it clear that she wanted to be known for her domestic policy rather than her domestic prowess.

She would be a new First Lady.

The trademarks of her predecessors — Barbara's pearls and Nancy's paste — were not going to be the symbols this woman would be known for.

She would be the first First Lady who had a career independent of her husband's. She would exude strength and confidence like none of her predecessors. For this, for breaking the mold of what a First Lady should be, Clinton would be punished mercilessly.

Turn on the TV, and there's Phil Gramm explaining why the First Lady doesn't know her "place."

Turn on the radio and there's the male caller laughing with the male host about what punishment it must be for Bill to sleep with the bitch.

The puns on late night proliferate like some twisted reincarnation of bad Dan Quayle jokes: Q: Why doesn't Hillary wear miniskirts? A: Because her balls would show.

This week's punishment comes in the manufactured "controversy" of Travelgate.

The criticism supposedly stems from newly-released documents that suggest the First Lady played a central role in the firings of several White House travel office employees in 1993. This contradicts Clinton's previous claim that she was not directly involved with the dismissals.

Wow, what a revelation. The First Lady may have actually fired travel agents. For this grave sin, Clinton is again being roasted by the critical flame of partisan critique in this election year.

Newsweek implies wrongdoing in its cover: "Hillary, saint or sinner?"

Conservative columnist William Safire, in his essay "Blizzard of Lies," argues passionately that "our First Lady is a congenital liar."

This so-called scandal is not about presenting the truth. It's about exaggerating the importance of meaningless White House dismissals. It's about punishing the First Lady for daring to be more. It's about an American anxiety over women who possess ambition, vision and power.

In the fall of 1993 Clinton exhibited her exceptional intelligence by clearly articulating the health-care plan for 300 members of Congress. The *New York Times* declared, "No previous First Lady has occupied the center stage so aggressively or disarmed her critics more effectively."

She was instrumental in the nomination and appointment of the first female attorney general, Janet Reno. While attending the Women's Conference in Beijing last summer, Clinton involved herself in a country where diplomatic relations are highly sensitive.



Keith Cunningham

In the meantime, she has dealt with the death of her father, juggled her roles as mother and wife and continued to deny the persistent rumors in Washington that she is a lesbian.

Then came the Republican sweep of 1994, and Clinton's experiment was over. Her actions would have to be muzzled if her husband were to have any shot at a second term.

Clinton increased her appearances with Chelsea and passed out homemade cookies at the next Democratic convention. Meanwhile, her advocacy shifted to causes that were more palatable to American tastes. Health care was traded in for breast cancer and women in developing nations.

Last spring, Clinton beamed as she opened the newly refurbished White House Blue Room to the press, saying that the room, with its satin draperies and silk upholstery, was her new favorite.

Today, in her weekly newspaper column, Hillary Clinton sounds more like the redecorating Jackie Kennedy and less like the reforming Eleanor Roosevelt. Her New Year's resolutions: "To keep the same hairdo for at least 30 days" and "try to show more enthusiasm for my husband's golf game."

This is the woman who was twice named one of the country's top 100 lawyers.

No America, Mrs. Clinton did not suddenly develop an interest in crocheting bonnets and churning butter without a reason. The First Lady is politically savvy enough to realize that the price of her progressiveness will always be paid by her husband in political capital.

And so, in this year's election, don't expect to see the redefined version of the First Lady on the campaign trail. No more sarcastic flips about staying at home and baking cookies.

In November count on seeing our First Lady with flour on her face and potholders on her hands. Her vision and ambition will not be displayed. Through the bombardment of jokes, rumors and scandals, this country has finally made it clear to Mrs. Clinton where her "place" is: redecorating, cooking and standing by her husband. The First Lady will be where she belongs.

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