



A bumpy, hour-long float plane ride separates Ipsoot village from the nearest pavement. Over a splattering of small green islands, through the V-notch passes that separate lofty peaks, under dark clouds, spiraling down, down, down to the narrow blue-gray inlet below. It is not a place you visit by accident. This must be distinctly understood.

Rock cliffs echo angry-insect engine noise as the plane sets down in the churning glacial gray river, down a path passing between snags stacked up by last week's flood. A floating dock is tied to the bank there, leaning at a clumsy low-tide diagonal. This is where you wait. The plane lifts off the river and disappears over the mountains and you wait.

In time, if the radio call got through, a man from the village arrives in a flat-bottomed boat, picking up the guests who wait there. With expert skill he revs the outboard engine, turning the boat this way to skirt the gravel bar, that way to miss the submerged stump. He knows these waters intimately. For millennia, their cedar canoes plied these waters. Outboard motors arrived late. Strapped to wooden sterns, outboards sent the old canoes flying, skipping across the water at breakneck speed. Older people tell stories of motoring their canoes far upstream, seeing places in a day that had once been days away by pole and by paddle. They know every twist and turn in this river. They have names for them.

Dropping passengers and gear on the sandy riverfront beach, the boatman points to a trail, one of several trails passing over the bear tracks, between cedar plank smoke houses, upslope through dense thimbleberry brush. That is the trail to your host's house. Canine pets, more wolf than dog, greet strangers with a yellow-eyed wolfish stare that slowly gives way to an accelerating wag of the tail. Houses line both sides of the meandering potholed lane, where children run and playfully shriek and stop in their tracks at the sight of a stranger. Strangers are a novelty here, not to be feared. Children -- young children -- ask for your name, make introductions, ask where you will be staying. Their parents wave from second-story doorways, curious, polite. (Lower stories are abandoned, doors left open, given over to the floods that roar through town as upstream glaciers melt. The space is used for storage, durable goods placed atop a sand-strewn floor. I am told about a family that eats well during the floods, fishing coho salmon from their downstairs living room.) The oldest people make their greetings in the street, in soft and dignified voices, repeat their internal conversations in English for my sake, each word carefully chosen.

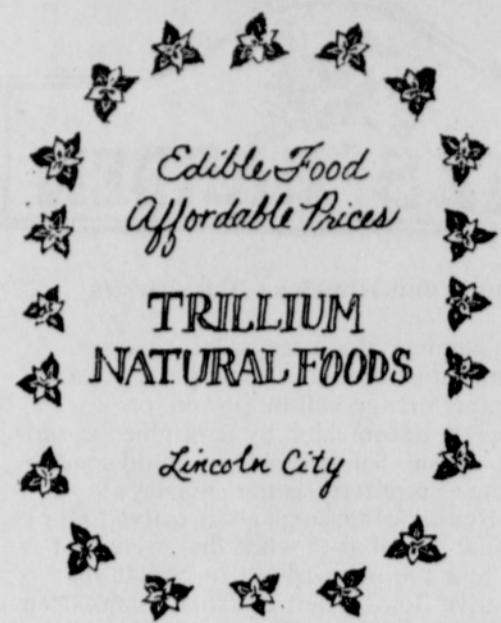
Over here, a missionary church stands beside a totem pole representing the village's four clans; the whole scene is dwarfed by looming mountains behind, sometimes cast white with tiny mountain goat dots. Over there, rotting totems tilt sideways and ancient burial trees stand straight -- spruce groves where lateral limbs cradled the dead. In the middle of town sits an old longhouse, its exterior clad in weathered-gray cedar planks. The outward face of this aged building is dull by design, made to mimic the look of a storage shed. Earlier this century, it was one of the last holdouts, one of the few places where traditional ceremonies continued clandestinely, while scouts kept watch for patrol boats and white police with orders to arrest anyone caught feasting, dancing, or singing the old songs. Stepping inside, the building transforms. Carved totemic posts support long cylindrical roof beams, arching over dirt floor and crackling mid-floor fire. Ancestors perch atop the heads of serpents. Faces look down from smoke hole's edge, with protruding tongues. Abstract geometric frogs and wolves cling to the walls, while the long drum, sitting front in center, is secretly a seal.

People gather there in the evening, talking, while wolf-dogs pass silently through the crowd. Young people tune hide drums over the fire, its warmth loosening the hide, changing the pitch. Bears, both black and grizzly, meander through town at night -- people arrive in fits and starts when the dogs stop barking, signaling to everyone that the coast is clear. Some older men, former loggers, former fishermen, men who have spent long hours off-reserve tell me that the young people gather here still to sing the old songs -- "You know... like Hank Williams." And then they laugh.

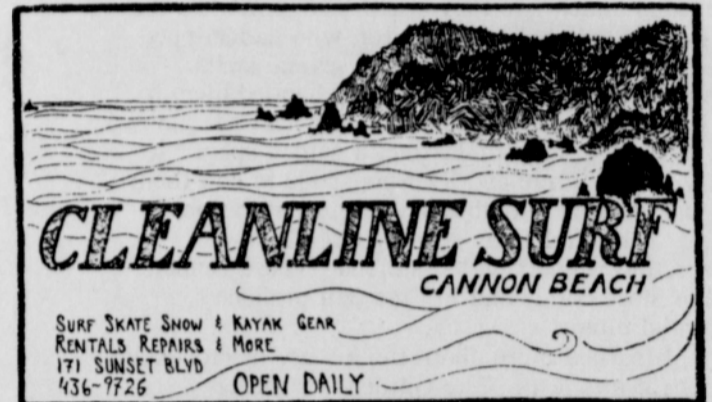
The hereditary chief sits at the front of the room, tired, a little, from a day spent showing us, his guests, the old root grounds, the fishing and hunting places, the sacred peaks. This old chief, whose ancestor emerged from a wolf, whose name proclaims that the smoke from his great feasts passes around the Earth, begins to sing. Old songs. No Hank Williams here. Songs written by his grandfather. Songs from before the Great Flood, in a form of their language so ancient that no-one knows its exact meaning. Songs that he, himself, has written. Songs of mourning, of celebration, of returning home.

Drums beating in ancient rhythms, in complex syncopation. Thump-thump. [pause] Thump. Thump-thump. [pause] Thump. Young people sing along with powerful voices, drumming on that patient seal. Then, late in the evening, a pause. "What should we sing now?" The old chief grins at me through the crowd and then puts on a serious face. Looking at the youngsters, he drums again. Rising up, rumbling, in a low and melodic voice. I hear the first and only English lyrics of the night. [thump-thump. thump. thump-thump. . .] Your cheat-in' heart. . . [thump-thump. thump. thump-thump. . .] will make you weep. . . [thump-thump. thump.] Lyrics sung monotone. Another one of the old songs. The young people laugh and drum along with this song, though its lyrics are unfamiliar, from before their time.

As the evening passes, people gathering closer, standing by the fire, the songs grow more melancholy -- the chief leaves tomorrow on a float plane, to a place less remote, a place closer to doctors and stores and white people. Tearful youthful singing is leavened with more chiefly humor. Then out into the night, people leaving the longhouse empty, smoke drifting up skyward, where the big dipper sits atop a mountain outlined with moonlit snow drifts. All quiet, except the howl of faraway wolves arriving on intermittent winds. The first fall salmon venture upriver, sneaking past the village in the silent darkness, going home to meet, to mate, and to die. The bears are out rustling in some distant thicket, and dogs sleep soundly. Walking home, elders ask that we return soon, to accompany their chief when he returns on that bumpy float plane ride under the clouds, between the peaks, and back to the village. We agree. The chief may leave tomorrow, but there'll be no teardrops tonight. We will be better than our word. We will return, we will meet here and sing again when the old chief comes home.



I pray. . . That I may seem, though I die old, a foolish passionate man.  
William Butler Yeats



When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary.  
Thomas Paine

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The 3rd Annual Art & Noise Symposium, with its always appropriate blend of the weird and beautiful, is a perfect specimen of entertainment to lead into the Halloween weekend. It's time well spent, checking out and showing support for innovative Music and Art; encouragement for people doing stuff you're not accustomed to being exposed to can be a fruitful thing. There is stuff going on in a wide-spreading underground mycelium network that has value and substance on a whole new level of consciousness; and supporting local, rarely exposed artists helps grow a stronger community as well. Many of the featured artists will have names that seem familiar, though not necessarily in the context of visual and aural art.

Some examples: Ramey Holzman, layout and graphics editor of our local arts & culture monthly Hipfish, will get some rare public exposure of her multi-media paintings; Andrea Kosharek and Sid Cooper, black and white photography, have probably waited on you in the Blue Sky Cafe or poured you a beer at Bill's Tavern; Roger Hayes (paintings and experimental Cyanosis sound) and Jessica Schlieff (paintings) spend a lot of time working at the Cannery Cafe as chef and waitress; Mariah Manners has re-shelved the book you checked out of the Clatsop Community College Library and creates beautifully vibrant art; Sally Lackaff has glued this block of words to this layout sheet and hopes to show up with a few bone mobiles. Others will be here from farther away -- Ben Soebly brings his amazing fascinating porcelain creatures up from Lincoln City; Robert Salter sends bizarre ink drawings from Wisconsin.

The music pouring from the doors of the Cannon Beach Community Hall will probably be like nothing you've ever heard before. There are new sounds being created by people starting their own traditions, spectrums of aural structures previously untapped. Again, many of the artists may have faces you recognize; they may mow your lawn (event producer and atrophy. frontman Jim Kosharek) or hand you your plate. Many are from elsewhere -- Portland, Corvallis, Seattle; and have traveled for the opportunity to mix minds with similar creators.

Some of those listed may not be able to appear and others may replace them -- no matter what turnout materializes, it will be unique, fresh, and new. New art is necessary and important, and should never be ignored; and it is imperative to build on new ideas. Many of the artists showcased on this night are celebrities in their circles -- we believe those circles should be widened, the ripples ringing further and further out to catch the eyes and ears of a broader audience. You may not know it, but there is something here for you. Come and find it.



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Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you chose them as your guides, and following them you reach your destiny.  
Carl Schurz

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