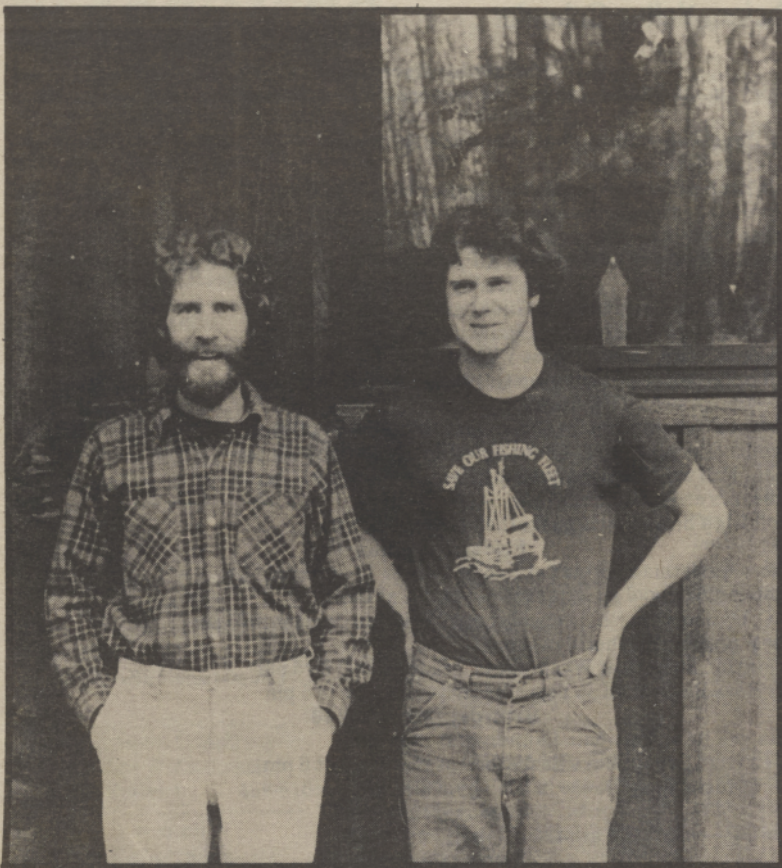




Dave and Dick Brunsman photo Jenelle Wiggins

Nehalem valley people Those who were here

The Brunsman Brothers

by Jenelle Wiggins

Dave and Peggy Brunsman, longtime residents of Vernonia are the proud parents of six children. Their two daughters, Carol and Mary are living in other states. Their four sons, Dave, Pete, Jim, and Dick have lived off and on in the Vernonia area for their whole lives. What I find unique about the Brunsman brothers is that they are not only brothers but also friends who have formed creative working partnerships with each other.

Jim Brunsman, 25, spent most of his boyhood out in the woods exploring old homesteads, digging for bottles or just walking and enjoying the countryside. Once he and a friend walked to Kaupi Lake and back in a days time. Jim remembers there was always something to do as a boy, and sometimes he got in trouble for having too much to do.

A favorite activity was hanging around the OA Mill which was shut down by this time and a playground for neighborhood kids. The old mill office made a good fort and the sawdust bin offered thrills and chills with its catwalk and rope swing. The braver boys would jump from the top

of the bin down into the pile of sawdust below. When he got older Jim and his friends took to their pickups and the back roads. Sometimes he still drives to Portland by way of Bacona.

Today Jim is a commercial fisherman, crabbing in the winter and purse seining in Alaska in the summertime.

"Vernonia men make good fishermen," Jim tells. "Being raised in the woods gives a person common sense. I like being in the woods and I like being on the water. I don't like the thought of being stuffed in a building somewhere. What I like about fishing is that it's never 9-5. You're either four days early or two days late. There's a lot of adventure. You always wonder what you might pull up on that hook!"

When Jim talks about fishing he radiates enthusiasm.

"A lot of my good buddies are fishermen," he continues. "A crew tends to get real close after they've suffered through a couple good storms. My dream is to someday get together with my brothers and build small wooden boats, old classics, for a living."



Jim and Pete Brunsman photo Jenelle Wiggins

Jim is spending less and less time on land these days. But when he does come ashore he makes a beeline to Vernonia whenever possible.

"The basics are still here, the people, the stores, and the logging atmosphere. Sometimes I almost wear my arm out waving. I remember once I got a job in Hawaii and spent the winter there. One day I started thinking about Vernonia and how spring was going to be breaking and everything would be turning emerald green. I got so homesick I just had to come back. Well when I got to Vernonia there was three feet of snow on the ground!"

Peter Brunsman, 28, also has a love of boats and has fished in Alaska along with Jim for the last three summers. Pete is skiff man, and his job consists of driving a small 18 to 20 ft. boat which is powered by a 6 cylinder diesel engine. It is his sole responsibility to position the net so that the salmon will swim into it instead of around it, and at the same time be on the lookout for logs or rocks which could rip the seine. Pete anticipates a fishing partnership with brother Jim within a few years. In the meantime he will continue logging in the winter and salmon fishing in the summer.

Peter says his most vivid childhood memory was the day they burned the O.A. Mill for the movie 'Ring of Fire.'

"I was in the 6th grade at the time," Pete remembers, "and they called me out of class by mistake. I was out of school for two days and got paid a whopping \$36.00. There were fire shooters and smoke machines all over town and I got to see Dave Jensen and Joyce Taylor. My part in the movie was to run alongside the train, and then jump in and scream. The second day my part was to run down main street screaming. It was all pretty exciting."

As a boy, Peter spent many hours after school working at Brunsman's hardware store. When he wasn't working he was off exploring old homesteads or playing in the sand caves down on Slaughter House Rd.

"When I was little I wanted to go to Yale to be a fireman or Harvard to be a cowboy," Peter laughs. "As it turned out I've spent most of my life right here in Vernonia! This town has a culture all of its own and if you're in good standing it's the friendliest town around. I guess what draws me back is that I can go a hundred different directions in five minutes and can be completely alone in nature, without ever catching a glimpse of another soul."

Dave Brunsman, 32 is the scholar among his brothers with a degree in Architecture from the Univ. of Oregon. He has worked for architect firms in San Francisco, Portland and Ghana, Africa and he has built houses in Cannon Beach,

Cascade Head, and Vernonia. David's style is distinctive in that it is always compatible with a forest environment. His designs blend with nature in their color, shapes, and function.

Three years ago David designed a house for his parents lot on O.A. hill overlooking Vernonia. The foundation was dug in April and with a neighbor Mike O'Brien and all four Brunsman brothers pitching in, the house was ready for occupancy by September. It is as beautiful as it is unique with its exposed beams, hemlock paneling and cedar board and batten outside.

David has a respect bordering on reverence for Mother nature. As a boy he explored with Glen and Billy Hawkins and remembers how much everyone loved the mysteries and magic of the woods.

"I'm a strong believer in forest management," says Dave, "but I'm just too busy to drop everything and drive to the closest National Forest when I want to be inspired by the old giant trees. We grew up never knowing what it's like to walk through an old growth forest and I really wish they had left a few old growth stands in this area for people to enjoy."

Dick Brunsman, 22, like all his brothers has a creative flair for building things. He and his brother Dave recently bought a house in Coquille, Oregon with plans of remodeling it and selling it. Dick studied engineering in college but feels he got his start by helping with the construction of his parents house.

"I helped from the digging of the foundation to the finish work and this really gave me the basics of house building. Dave and I worked together well. Unfortunately I got stuck with a lot of the dirty work because I'm the youngest," Dick tells with a laugh.

He is looking forward to the winter in Coquille but plans to make regular visits to Vernonia.

"It's a great place to grow up and I always enjoy visiting my parents in their new house that we all helped to build. Someday I hope we can all work together again. When I think about it, it's nice being the youngest cause that way I can learn from everybody else's mistakes."

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