



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

142nd YEAR, No. 174

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2015

ONE DOLLAR

## Veteran surprised with long lost honor



**JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian**  
Albert Morris receives applause during a ceremony at Clatsop Post 12 American Legion. During the ceremony, Morris was presented with a copy of the original citation of Morris' 1949 Silver Lifesaving Medal, as well as a replica of the legion's Gold Medal of Valor. Morris received the Medal from Baltimore Post 27 in 1949.

Albert Morris earned a lifesaving medal for a 1948 rescue while in the Coast Guard

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
*The Daily Astorian*

On a weekend that overflowed with fish tales, this one was a whale.

Albert Morris was a 20-year-old boatswain's mate third class on the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Balsam in 1948 that was dispatched to the sinking tug Neptune off the coast of Washington state. Braving rough seas and raging wind, Morris and another guardsman scrambled down the cargo net to help some of the 11 crewmen from the tug board the cutter.

At one point, Morris jumped into a rubber boat separating the vessels to place lines around stricken crewmen struggling to climb aboard.

The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury

awarded Morris the Silver Lifesaving Medal — the guard's second-class honor for heroic rescues — in 1949 for his "outstanding courage, initiative, and unwavering devotion to duty."

But the medal and citation, along with other honors Morris had earned, disappeared while he was serving on Wake Island some 55 years ago. He thought they were lost forever.

On Saturday afternoon at Clatsop Post 12 American Legion, the Coast Guard and Morris' friends from the legendary Salvage Chief — where he worked after retiring from the guard — surprised him with a copy of the original citation.

"It is our great honor to present this to you, an award that you earned so many years ago. A member of our

greatest generation and one of our fellow Coast Guardsmen and a true Coast Guard hero," said retired Coast Guard Vice Admiral Ray Riutta, who presented Morris the long lost decoration with Capt. Daniel Travers, the commander of Sector Columbia River, and Capt. Sean MacKenzie, the deputy commander.

While Morris' medal could not be recreated, MacKenzie said the Coast Guard historian's office was able to obtain a copy of the citation from the National Archives.

Mike Phillips, the commander of the American Legion post, also presented Morris with a replica of the legion's Gold Medal of Valor, which Morris had first received from Baltimore Post 27 in 1949.

The ceremony was the highlight of a reunion for former crew of the Salvage

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## Packed to the gills with poets

Salty wordsmiths wash up in Astoria for FisherPoets

By **EDWARD STRATTON**  
*The Daily Astorian*

There were somber, nostalgic and comedic goodbyes passing between the salty FisherPoets Sunday at the Astoria Event Center. More than 80 of them had traveled to Astoria from Oregon, 10 other U.S. states, British Columbia and Finland for the 18th annual FisherPoets, a celebration of commercial fishing and its stories.

"I want to thank everybody personally," said Gearhart's Jay Speakman, part of a core group of volunteers organizing the FisherPoets Gathering, along with Jon Broderick of Cannon Beach. "Because like I said the first night ... you guys all get a crew share, but the rest of us that get to stay here, we get to split the boat's share, and that's the bigger share."

"We get a big payback from this, and we sure appreciate it when everybody comes. You go through as much trouble as we do to get here, and it doesn't seem like a lot after we see how people enjoy this."

FisherPoets venues across downtown Astoria, were packed to the gills Friday and Saturday.

Most of the FisherPoets came from the West Coast, including 29 from Washington, 19 from Alaska, 17 from Oregon and five each from British Columbia and California. One or two each traveled from Idaho, Hawaii, Arkansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Florida. The honor of this year's farthest-flung FisherPoet, in a festival that last year attracted two BBC reporters, went to Jen Pickett, a fisherwoman of two decades in Alaska living in Jyväskylä, Finland.

"What brings me back here is the community here and FisherPoets," Pickett said, who endured a daylong commute and 10 hours time differ-



**JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian**  
FisherPoet Dave Densmore, of Astoria, reads a poem chastising young, cocky, fishermen during a performance at Astoria Event Center Saturday. View more photos online at [www.dailyastorian.com](http://www.dailyastorian.com)

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Read about an Astorian who opened his West Coast combination boat for tours on **Page 10A**.

ence for the reunion. "It's just something I need to do, to come back here and see all my friends and hear their stories, and their poems and songs. And I can relate to them so much. It's a little bit like coming home. I feel like a salmon that has found my stream."

Pickett, a freelance writer and poet, runs a blog at <http://pick-fishtales.blogspot.com>, sharing her stories of being a fisherwoman in Alaska. She is also studying for a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Jyväskylä.

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**JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian**  
Jen Pickett, of Jyväskylä, Suomi, performs spoken word poetry at the Astoria Event Center Saturday. Behind her, ASL interpreter Judi Webb, of Portland, translates Pickett's poem.

## Oscar B is here to stay

New, larger ferry slipped into its new home Friday

By **KYLE SPURR**  
*The Daily Astorian*

The Oscar B traveled a long way by sea to its permanent location between Puget Island, Wash., and Westport, where it will serve as the last ferry on the lower Columbia River.

On Friday morning, the Oscar B reached its destination.

The new ferry's arrival marked the end of a nearly five-year process to replace the original, aging Ferry Wahkiakum, in service since 1962.

Washington's Wahkiakum County Public Works Director Pete Ringen, who is planning to retire at the end of the year, said the project has been, at times, complicated, but ultimately worth it to see the new ferry docked in his county.

The \$5.7 million Oscar B, named after former skipper and owner Oscar Bergsens, made it to Puget Island at 9 a.m. Friday from Whidbey Island, north of Seattle, where it was constructed by Nichols Brothers Boat Builders of Freeland, Wash. A captain drove it by sea, docked it in Astoria last week, and made the final push to Puget Island Friday.

"The phrase I have used is 'we don't know what the future holds, but we have helped to secure the possibilities,'" Ringen said. "It's a good feeling. It's been a tough project, challenging for a small county to take this on. In the big picture, it's worthwhile."

While awaiting the Oscar B's arrival, Legacy Contracting Inc. of Salem has worked to upgrade the ferry landings on each side of the river in Westport and Puget Island.

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## Stacy Burr covers gamut of likely catastrophes

Cannon Beach hires new emergency consultant

CANNON BEACH — The city of Cannon Beach has hired its new emergency preparedness consultant.

Stacy Burr, a Eugene resident and the owner of Stacy M. Burr, Consulting, officially took over the part-time position Jan. 29, filling the role left by Bill Vanderberg, who stepped down in fall 2013.

She will advise city managers, the emergency preparedness committee and the predeployment container committee



— which manages the tsunami storage container program — on how to strengthen and expand their efforts to protect Cannon Beach's residents and visitors during emergencies,



Submitted  
**Stacy Burr, of Eugene, is the new emergency preparedness coordinator for Cannon Beach.**

especially natural disasters.

Her duties will include updating the city's "incident action plan," a playbook for handling emergencies; conducting on-

site Incident Command System training; developing Cannon Beach's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); and pursuing federal Department of Homeland Security grants for projects like upgrading critical infrastructure, City Manager Brant Kucera said.

Burr will "help us build our emergency systems up to the best of our ability in a small town, to build up the places where we are weak and to reinforce the places where we are currently strong," said Paula Vetter, a member of the emergency preparedness committee. "We're really excited to have her on board."

**Cascadia**  
Though Burr will cover the

gamut of potential catastrophes, the long-anticipated Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami is her top priority.

"That's the biggest emergency we could have to face," said Bob Mushen, vice chairman of the emergency preparedness committee. "And we have no idea, of course, when that's going to happen."

When it does happen, the city will need to create shelters, distribute food and water, set up sanitation, provide medical care, do crowd control — all requiring well-trained volunteers. Burr will help the emergency preparedness committee attract more people to serve during an emergency, Mushen said.

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