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ONE DOLLAR



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Lektro President and CEO Eric Paulson took the stage Saturday at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds to thank his employees and customers for the continued success of the 70-year-old manufacturer.

## From tinker to tug, Lektro celebrates another milestone

### Vision, foresight helped high-tech company thrive

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

Eric Paulson took the stage Saturday night at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds exhibition hall. He faced many of the current and former employees and customers of Lektro, the electric vehicle company he has been president of for the past 30 years. Below the stage sat his 93-year-old mother, Violet Paulson, the company's co-founder with her husband and his dad, Wilt. "Yesterday would have been dad's 94th birthday," Eric said to a roar of applause. He, his family and the entire Lektro community gathered to toast 70 years of the company's success as one of the coast's few high-tech manufacturers, turning out its signature, electric towbarless airplane tug to send around the world.

#### The tinkerer

Wilt Paulson had been teaching members of the Women's Army Corps in Portland during World War II, Violet Paulson said. Then he gave up his job, as she did with hers at Northwestern Ice & Cold Storage Co. They each borrowed \$1,000 from their parents and started Willamette Aircraft & Engine Co., converting military aircraft to civilian use.

In 1948, Lektro moved from Beaverton to the Astoria Regional Airport in Warrenton, where the company set up shop in one of the Port of Astoria's hangars.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Lektro CEO Eric Paulson, background, stopped for a photo inside one of the company's electric golf carts with his sister and former employee Lenna Johansen, left, and his mother, Violet Paulson, a co-founder of Lektro's predecessor, Willamette Aircraft & Engine Co.

Wilt Paulson was described as a man who liked to help other people fix problems. Lektro's first product was a fan to control slash burns for local loggers, using surplus airplane engines. Paul Autio, founder of Knappa food industry manufacturer Autio Co., needed a silent mink feeder to avoid irking the mothers, who were

eating their young at the approach of the noisy vehicles. Paulson helped invent the first electric mink feeder in 1950, the company's first foray into electric vehicles.

Over the years, helping locals with their problems, Paulson would help invent the first electric golf cart, Finnish sauna, chicken feeder, forklift and other warehouse vehicles, many variants of the original mink feeder.

In 1967, when a friend from Portland wanted to move his aircraft without harming the nose gear, Paulson helped him use a mink feeder chassis to create what became the Airporter, Lektro's first electric towbarless tug and its signature product since the 1980s.

#### The employees

"Without the employees, there wouldn't be a Lektro," Eric Paulson said Saturday, holding back tears as he told the audience about second- and third-generation employees. One second-generation employee, Ed Farmer, was in the audience with his son, Michael, a third-generation employee who started last summer at Lektro.

"I built the first Airporter," said Farmer, who worked at Lektro for 43 years and retired in 2012.

He had just moved to Astoria in 1964 from Southern California and spent a day as a choker-setter before a friend recommended he stop by Lektro and speak with Wilt Paulson.

"He needed a welder, and he hired me on the spot," said Farmer, adding his father, William, who taught him to weld, started at Lektro five years after.

Many from the Paulson family tree have also worked at Lektro, including his sister, Lenna Johansen, and her son, Jim. Johansen said the

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## LNG public hearings wrap up

Opponents deliver objections, Oregon LNG offers rebuttal

By ERICK BENDEL  
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The anti-LNG contingent that showed up at the Warrenton Community Center Thursday evening to oppose Oregon LNG's terminal and pipeline project planned for the Skipanon Peninsula was smaller than Wednesday's fire-hazard-level turnout, but no less vehement.

During the second and final public hearing on the company's land use permit applications, the project's opponents delivered the last of their oral testimony to Daniel Kearns, a Portland land use attorney appointed by the Warrenton City Commission to serve as an independent hearings officer and decide whether to grant Oregon LNG's permits.

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## Bornstein Seafoods expands

Fish processor wins bid for Port warehouse space

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

On the same night the Port of Astoria Commission heard two pitches to operate the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, it also heard proposals from two local fish processors to fill vacant warehouse space on Pier 2 with box storage or cold storage.

The Port Commission went with a proposal by Bornstein Seafoods to fill the 11,000 square feet of vacant space with boxes for packing seafood.

Commissioners Robert Mushen, James Campbell and John Raichl voted yes. Stephen Fulton voted no, while Bill Hunsinger abstained.

"We're taking three warehouses we have across this county, and we're consolidating them into this space," said Andrew Bornstein, co-owner of Bornstein Seafoods. "We can burn through a truck of cardboard in a weekend. We need a place to store it."

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## Gov. Brown promises to fix energy tax credit problems

No one punished for allowing sales that violated rules

By HILLARY BORRUD  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon energy officials have decided not to follow through on their plan to rewrite the rules for sales of energy tax credits, and Gov. Kate Brown says questions raised about the program are being addressed.

Both developments come in

response to an audit by the Secretary of State's Office that confirmed reporting by the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau that raised questions about the pricing of those credits when sold to third parties.

Publicly, the Oregon Department of Energy has proposed a routine tweak to administrative rules.

However, interviews and public records revealed energy officials had allowed some



Gov. Kate Brown

companies and wealthy individuals to purchase the tax credits at deeper discounts than allowed under state price regulations, and the deals appeared to contradict the intent of lawmakers who wanted to prohibit the practice. The energy agency also gave a competitive advantage to tax credit brokers who knew they could ignore the state's published price rules. The proposed rule change, which would

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