

A true history of Cannon Beach

Fundraiser planned for publishing second edition of 'Comin' in Over the Rock' by Peter Lindsey

Peter Lindsey is a storyteller with a lifetime of stories to tell about Cannon Beach.

Whether it's about his teenage days roaming through the local woods; surfing and lifeguarding on the beach; towing vehicles sinking in the sand; or interacting with the numerous characters that gathered at the gas stations, in the bars or on the sidewalks of Cannon Beach before it became a tourist destination, Lindsey has many stories to tell.

So many, in fact, that he wrote a book full of stories in 2004. Titled "Comin' in Over the Rock: A Storyteller's History of Cannon Beach," the book traces the village's history from the early days when settlers traveled a forest road with 111 curves from Seaside, to the 1980s, when the logging community had matured into a picturesque town of shingled stores and homes where visitors arrived via a sleek highway.

But, although Lindsey taught English at Seaside High School and Clatsop Community College, his history doesn't read like a textbook. It is filled with anecdotes, and in a few months, a second edition will be filled with even more.

Lindsey will read some of those stories during a fundraiser at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10, in the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce's community hall. Food, beer and wine will be served.

The fundraiser is being organized by a group of Lindsey's friends who believe it's time to offer the book to another generation interested in the village's early days. Donations will go to the estimated \$4,000 cost to publish the book through Portland State University.

"I have this notion about characters," Lindsey writes in his book. "When this country was young, the spaces were vast. The northern Oregon coast had scant population and limitless nature. Large spaces require powerful spirit and character."

"The shriveled pissant existence suburban dwellers accept today would have dumbfounded the people I knew as a boy. Their personalities colored the community canvas with broad brush strokes and a steady hand."

"A person might well be a rascal, but he had ... better be a bull-goose rascal, a rascal of proportion and spirit, a rascal among rascals casting a wide shadow."

Lindsey's family moved to Cannon Beach when Lindsey was a teenager in

1954, but his parents were summer visitors long before Lindsey was born and through Lindsey's early childhood.

"We were a jog away from Seaside, which was a resort community," Lindsey said in an interview. "My family came here in the summers because that's what people did."

"It didn't swell up a great deal in the summer. There were about 20

families, 30 families. The same families would appear summer after summer. And there were crowds on the beach on major holidays, driving on the beach."

Lindsey said his father was a City Councilor when the village became an incorporated city in 1957.

In those days, Cannon Beach had two drug stores, a bowling alley and, apparently, several gas stations, where all the characters hung out.

The drug stores and bowling alley are gone now, and there's only one gas station in town. The characters — "Old Peach," who cohabitated with recent widows; "Beargrease," an ex-convict who attempted to elope with the Baptist preacher's daughter; Dog Lady, a spinster who took in stray animals and crumpled birds; and "Honey Pot," who would get drunk every night at Bill's Tavern and "lose" his car — parked only 50 feet from the tavern door — also are long gone.

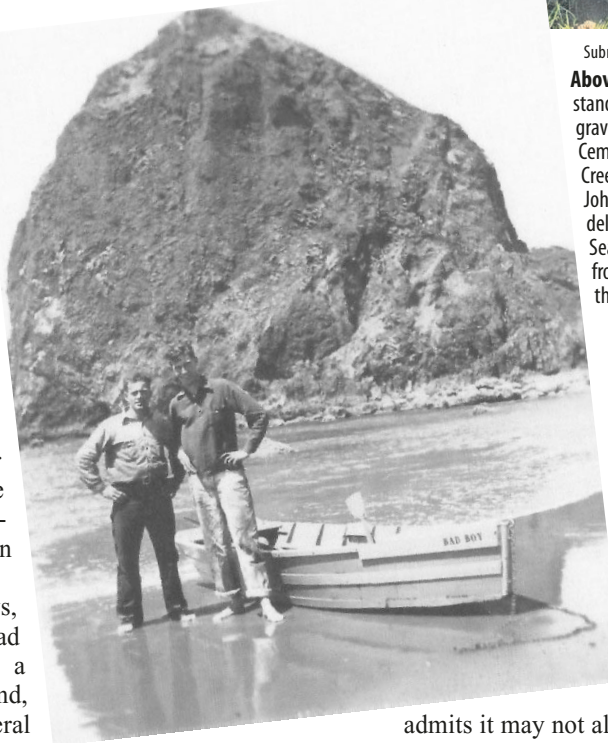
"A good number of the stories, or anecdotes, are stories that were either told to me, I overheard or I experienced directly," said Lindsey, who insists they all are true. "You don't have to fabricate interesting stories, believe me. We have plenty of them."

Because his "history" is based on his and others' memories, however, Lindsey



Submitted photo by Rex Amos

Above: Peter Lindsey stands by a Gerritse gravestone in Evergreen Cemetery on Beerman Creek Road near Seaside. John and Mary Gerritse delivered mail from Seaside to Tillamook from the 1890s until the early 1900s.



Submitted photo supplied by Cannon Beach History Center & Museum

Left: Les Ordway and a buddy stand next to Ordway's dory boat Bad Boy. Ordway, a local mechanic, used to take the 12-foot-long boat to the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, three miles offshore.

admits it may not always be factually correct. The new edition, however, will be somewhat more historically accurate, thanks to the efforts of Rainmar Bartl, the city's former planning director, who tends to pay more attention to details.

Bartl is among Lindsey's friends who are shepherding the book — which will have

more stories, photos and a map — toward a second publication.

Lindsey captured the atmosphere of the town as it matured from a working class village to a tourist destination, Bartl said.

"To me, it's a true history of Cannon Beach of a time that Peter captured so well," he added.

The fundraiser Nov. 10 will offer gifts to donors, including a signed copy of the new book and an acknowledgment in the book for those contributing \$100 and readers' copies of the book for contributors of \$25 to \$50, Bartl said.

The winner of the auction at the fundraiser will be treated to a dinner for six prepared by Hank Johnson at the Wave Crest Inn. Bids will begin at \$300.

Music will be provided by the local group Floating Glass Balls.

Those who cannot attend the event but want to contribute can make out a check to Lindsey and drop it off at the Cannon Beach Book Co., 130 N. Hemlock St.

"I loved it. It was a wonderful place for a young person," said Lindsey who moved to Cannon Beach from Millbrae, Calif., where housing developments had sprung up to serve returning Korean War vets.

In Cannon Beach, the woods and the ocean lured young explorers, who came up with all sorts of adventures in an era that was less threatening to children and their parents.

In his book, Lindsey has a photo of himself and best friend, Gerald Sroufe, on their bikes, with sleeping bags strapped to them. They're about to ride to Arch Cape and camp overnight, with supper coming from cans of Dinty Moore stew. Lindsey estimated they were 12 years old at the time.

"My family would let us roam free ... We would head to the woods and go fishing or camping, shoot things with our guns or walk around the beach or fish off the rocks," Lindsey said. "We would come home at dark. No one worried whether we had run afoul of something. It was a delightful feeling."

"There was an awful lot of freedom. It was pretty nice to have."

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Story by NANCY MCCARTHY