

# BOOKS

WHAT ARE THEY READING?

## What if Tom McCall had become president?

Beach Books is a nook for authors, inspiration

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

**S**EASIDE — In case you don't appreciate it yet, Seaside is lucky to have Beach Books, a thriving and pulsing center of the literary arts.

In October, we passed through the waist-high gate (to keep the cat in) and stepped upstairs to the balcony. There, authors engaged in the timeless art of hawking their books, one which I have done once or twice myself.

Nothing could require more nerve than to stand there with your newest "child" in front of you for the world to see. Some authors are grateful if more than a handful of browsers stop by their table in an afternoon — it can feel like the loneliest job in the world.

But at Beach Books, business was buzzing, with authors and the readers to match. It was a testament to the literary connections of the store's proprietress, Karen Emmerling, and to the authors themselves who were able to inspire weekend walkers and bumper car enthusiasts over to the Gilbert District.

The place was "lousy with writers" to paraphrase Raymond Chandler, and bringing to mind those film noir days were the dashing Nestucca Spit Press authors, Bill Hall and Matt Love.

Hall is the author of "McCallandia: A Utopian Novel," and also happens to be the chairman of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners. Kind of makes me want to check out what goes on at those meetings.

The book was inspired by a picture of Ronald Reagan and Tom McCall. Hall's friend, author and publisher Matt Love, hypothesized what if it had been McCall who was president, not Reagan? I love this book, which is filled with history and cultural commentary, and so seamless you sometimes don't know which is real history and what is Hall's creative vision.

Astoria's Love showcased his newest work, "The Great Birthright: An Oregon Novel."

Like much of his other work, "Walking in Rain" or "A Nice Piece of Astoria," Love uses narrative and collage to celebrate those who fought for Oregon's famed Beach Bill — Oregonians' "birthright."

Love creates a diabolical entrepreneur who seeks to take that birthright away, to "promote private ownership and economic development of America's undeveloped coastal place?"

Love calls this "a work of pseudo-pulp historical environmental detective socialist metafiction."

Take that, Batman!!!

### Rocket man, coastal poet

A solemn presence belies a gentle man, Gregory E. Zschomler. The Cannon Beach author was at a table stacked with his titles, including "Rocket Man: From the Trailer Park to Insomnia and Beyond." He culls wit and wisdom from around the spectrum sprinkled into an inspirational memoir. The title comes from his lifelong fascination with outer space: "Something was out there and I felt it," he writes. "Was that something calling to me? I wanted to know. Maybe not just then, but eventually (certainly by the time I was 6)."

Poet Nancy Slavin saw my Cubs cap and immediately confessed to Chicago origins. Her first book "Moorings" explored her experience as an Alaska fishing guide. Now living on the Oregon Coast, her poetry hikes some of the same inspiration guiding Oregon's literary laureates: the sea, the beaches and the forest.

In "Ecotone," she describes the "natural zone between land and sea, where life holds to rock while waves work to wash life clean."

Her pen is unawed by painful truths: cold snaps, cold winds, wintry damp and the displaced poor. "When night falls and there is no heat, will they know the taste of death is bitter-sweet?" Slavin writes in the poem "November Flood."

### Seaside scribes

My favorite "new" author at the Beach Books signing was Gloria Stiger Linkey, Seaside's "historian" and resident since 1941. We had a fascinating talk in which she shared the inner history of Seaside's riots — the first in the



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Authors Bill Hall and Matt Love of Nestucca Spit Press.



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Some of the recent titles by local authors.

1960s, in which spring break kids erupted — and the second in the 1990s, when a film crew incited a crowd into violence.

Stiger Linkey is the author of "Great Indian Women" and is working on her seminal work, "A Town Called Seaside," scheduled for release in February. She describes it as looking back from Memorial Day 1941 to Memorial Day 2015, "a compelling story about survival and rebuilding a small town, the war years, recession, riots and a tsunami. The spirit of the town is reflected by the spirit of the citizens who would not let the town die. It was the love and unlimited energy of these people who turned the town into one of the leading resort towns on the Oregon Coast."

Finally, I have wanted to read the work of Honey Perkel since I arrived in Seaside, and picked up her stunning memoir, "Just Breathe," her compelling, emotional story about the loss of her son. I read it in an afternoon.

For those of you who think there are any easy solutions when a loved one is suffering from mental illness, Perkel's transformational story leaves you with the sense that the process is the path, and redemption is only found within our own courage to move forward. I wish this book could have had a happy ending.

Perkel's newest book is a mystery, "House of Sand," and it takes place in Seaside. Scary title!

If these types of speeding-signing, author-meets appeals to you, I hope you were able to get to Seaside Public Library for "Crazy Eights Author Tour," presented by the Seaside Library Foundation. And may I recommend a visit to the Community Room of the Seaside Public Library Saturday, when Friends of the Seaside Library welcome Hall and you can ask him all about Tom McCall.

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.



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Authors Honey Perkel and Gloria Linkey at Beach Books in Seaside.



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Author Gregory Zschomler displays his work at Beach Books in Seaside.



Submitted Photo

"McCallandia" by author Bill Hall.



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