

Private plane crashes into Columbia River

Two people are confirmed missing

The Daily Astorian

Authorities are searching for a private plane from Vancouver, Washington, that crashed into the Columbia River off Pier 39 in Astoria late Wednesday afternoon.

A 69-year-old Clark County man, John McKibbin — a former Clark County commissioner and an amateur pilot — was on board with a woman, Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin said. The pair had planned to scatter the ashes of the woman's husband over the river, The Columbian reported.

Bergin did not release the woman's identity.

McKibbin was last seen about 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, when he and the woman took off from Pearson Field in Vancouver, headed for the mouth of the Columbia River, The Columbian reported.

"A very proficient pilot, but it looks like we might have had an unfortunate circumstance," Bergin said.

Eyewitnesses reported that the plane — a 1941 North American military trainer with a polished aluminum body, a red nose and tail, and a 40-foot wing-

span — went into the river at roughly 4 p.m. Wednesday.

The U.S. Coast Guard performed a first-light search Thursday morning, and the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office will send a crew out to search the area around noon.

The agencies scanned the area for approximately three hours on Wednesday. Though rescue teams did not find the aircraft, "we did find lots of oil dots yesterday coming up from the surface," Bergin said.

Authorities search the Columbia River after reports of a small plane crash on Wednesday. More photos online at dailyastorian.com



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

THE DEAD GO DIGITAL

New online database will help people navigate Ocean View Cemetery, find burial info



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Recreation Coordinator Terra Patterson is working to digitize the Ocean View Cemetery's burial records, which are housed at the Astoria Recreational Center.

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

A new digital database of the people buried at Ocean View Cemetery will allow visitors to more easily find a loved one's gravesite and detailed information about the burials themselves.

Astoria's Parks and Recreation Department, which manages and maintains the historic cemetery in Warrenton, plans to roll out the electronic research tool by summer, said Terra Patterson, the recreation coordinator overseeing the project.

"At this point, it's trouble-shooting," Patterson said.

Mark Scott, a geographer from Ocean Park, Washington, who was contracted to build the database, has designed a Geographic Information System map to help users navigate the sprawling, 50-acre cemetery, where more than 20,000 people are laid to rest.



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Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Books of burial permits are stacked on a cabinet containing index cards used for quickly finding people buried at Ocean View Cemetery.

Port gets warning for dock decay

Vehicle weight limit, repairs ordered at pier

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The state Department of Transportation has advised the Port of Astoria that a decaying and structurally deficient eastern dock at Pier 2 might have to close unless significant repairs are made by July.

The state has recommended a 3-ton weight limit for vehicles as a minimum rating to keep the dock in service during the repair work.

The roadway on the east side of Pier 2, considered a public bridge by the state, is where several fish processors that employ hundreds of workers in the busy season load seafood on refrigerated trucks.

"We're coming into shrimp and hake season, and fish needs to be offloaded," said Jim Knight, the Port's executive director.

Confirming fears

Knight said the Port suspected Pier 2 had issues and wanted to prioritize maintenance, which is why the Port called the state bridge team to conduct a review.

State inspectors spent days in skiffs and dinghies underneath the pier, checking the underpinnings. They identified a long segment of the eastern dock in critical need of repair because of decay and a lack of structural support. The area is just northwest of a new segment of dock the Port funded with a state infrastructure grant.

"We recommend the bridge be posted at 3 tons for all vehicles," State Bridge Engineer Bruce Johnson informed the Port in a letter this month. "This is the minimum rating for a bridge to remain in service."

The Port has already erected barriers to keep vehicles off the critical portion of the dock. Johnson said the 3-ton posting signs should be placed by April 1.

The state inspectors identified six urgent and 42 critical piling bents — the transverse framework that holds up the pier — needing repair by July 1. Johnson's letter recommended the Port close the dock on the eastern side of the pier entirely if the repairs are not done by July.

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Cremation on the rise, preferred to traditional burials

Costs, mobility and scattering ashes key in huge increases

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

More families are choosing to cremate their loved ones' remains rather than go with a traditional full burial.

The national cremation rate nearly doubled from 24.8 percent in 1999 to 46.7 percent in 2014, according to the Cremation Association of North America. And Oregon, whose cremation rate reached 73.9 percent two years ago, has the third highest rate behind Nevada and Washington.

At Ocean View Cemetery in Warren-

ton, the cremation rates rose from about 45 percent of burials in 2010 to about 62 percent in 2015, according to data provided by the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department, which oversees the cemetery.

"The trend has definitely gone towards cremations," Terra Patterson, a parks department staff member, said.

Why the rise?
"The reason why cremation is more popular than casket burial these days is because of the significant difference in costs," said Jake Boulet, funeral director at Hughes-Ransom Mortuary. "There's a lot more costs involved regarding a full-casket burial."

Caskets alone can cost thousands of dollars, whereas an urn can be purchased for anywhere from a few hundred dollars to less than \$50.

Brian Dutton, owner and operator of

Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Services in Astoria, said, "More and more, I'm seeing people saying, 'For us, it is finances.'"

"The cost of burying — if you look just at the cemetery expense alone — people sometimes are very surprised to find out that the cemetery expense is sometimes much more than the funeral home and casket," he said. "It's over \$3,000 to do a burial at Ocean View Cemetery, and that doesn't include a headstone."

Ocean View Cemetery allows up to four urns to be buried in a single plot, Patterson said.

"When you go out to Ocean View Cemetery and look at all those monuments and stuff, it's surprising how many of them have ashes buried under them, not caskets and vaults and that sort of thing," Dutton said.

Changing attitudes

Russ Warr, who owns Astoria Granite Works — a business that makes monuments for gravestones — has watched the downward spiral of the monument business over the last two decades, as more people opt to cremate and forgo the burial routine altogether.

"My industry has changed dramatically over the years, and that's one reason that we also do granite countertops now that we didn't do 20 years ago," Warr said.

But Warr sees the shift toward cremation as the result of a shift in social attitudes toward death care, including the fact that people like that cremation allows for greater mobility.

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