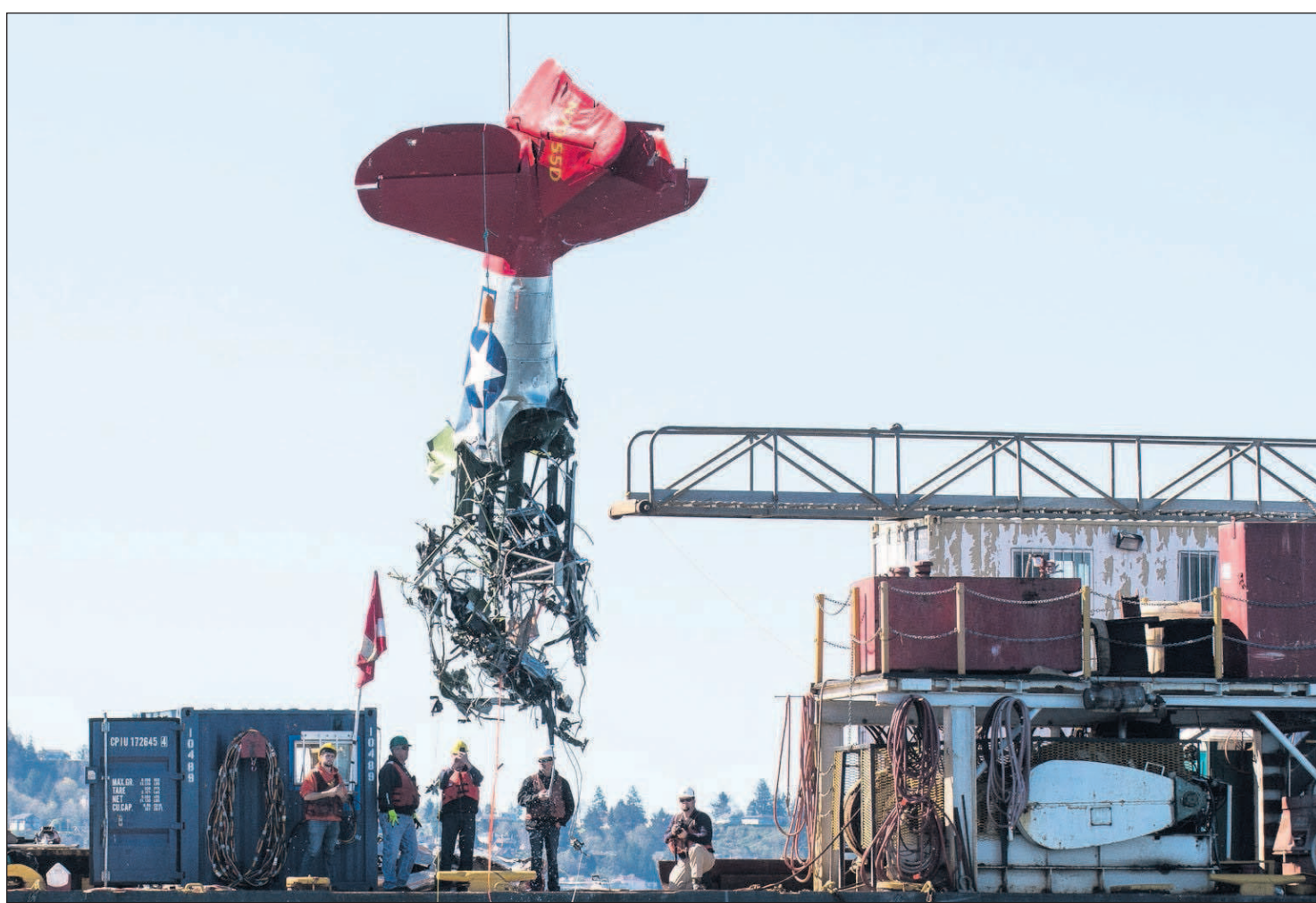




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INSIDE



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Crews remove plane debris from the Columbia River on Tuesday. The privately owned AT-6A North American military trainer from 1941 crashed into the river about a mile north of Pier 39 in Astoria on March 23.

RAISED FROM THE RIVER

National Transportation Safety Board investigation underway

By ERICK BENDEL
The Daily Astorian

A salvage crew has recovered most of the wreckage from the site where two Washington state residents died in a plane crash about a mile north of Astoria's Pier 39 last week.

The recovery took place Tuesday, almost a week after the airplane's owner, John McKibbin — a 69-year-old Vancouver, Washington, man — flew Irene Mustain, 64, of Woodland, Washington, to the coast, where she wanted to scatter her husband's ashes on his 69th birthday.

"John had done this previously on at least two or three other occasions that I knew, and maybe more," George Welsh, McKibbin's friend, who co-owned the plane with him, said.

A pair of small buoys floating a short distance apart — barely visible in the wide mouth of the Columbia River — marked the underwater crash site. One was tethered to the mangled fuselage and tail section, the other to the detached right wing.

Those were the two largest pieces of plane remaining after the impact. The nose and left wing had broken up, the propeller engine had come off and the aluminum skin had shattered, leaving shards spread throughout the debris field.

The private aircraft — a World War II-era North American AT-6A — had taken off in the afternoon of March 23 from Vancouver's Pearson Field and reportedly went down around 4 p.m., according to eyewitnesses.

Sonar scans and blobs of fuel floating on the river's surface led the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office marine patrol to the missing plane's location Friday.

See PLANE, Page 12A



ABOVE: Crews position the barge as they prepare to remove plane debris from the Columbia River on Tuesday.

LEFT: Crews inspect plane debris onboard a barge on Tuesday.

Arts center offer booed off stage

College board rejects affordable housing bid

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Clatsop Community College Board rejected an offer on the Performing Arts Center and Josie Peper Building Tuesday after impassioned public comments from people who use the center for plays and concerts.

The college had been approached by a developer earlier this month tendering an unsolicited offer on the buildings at 16th and Franklin streets for an as-yet undisclosed amount. Karen Radditz, the Realtor representing the college on the offer, said the developer intended to develop affordable, student and short-term housing for Columbia Memorial Hospital on the city block, while keeping the Performing Arts Center a "community center."

The identity of the developer was unknown until after the meeting, when Radditz revealed it was WTJ Development, a limited liability corporation registered in October to attorney Donald Grim in Portland, according to state records.

See ARTS CENTER, Page 7A

Liberty chooses interim manager

Shepherd has worked with the Astoria Music Festival

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Carol Shepherd, who was brought in to provide direction during the management turmoil at the Astoria Music Festival, has been hired as the interim manager of the Liberty Theater.

Shepherd is an experienced manager who has worked with several nonprofits and arts organizations. She is expected to start Friday.

Rosemary Baker-Monaghan, who was the executive director of the Liberty Theater for the past decade, has resigned effective April 15.

"We look forward to the future and how we can better serve the community of the North Coast," the theater's board of directors said in a statement. "We strive to provide quality entertainment from all areas of the performing arts. We are excited about the experience that Carol brings to the table and the management experience she will provide."

The theater's board also recognized Baker-Monaghan, a former mayor of Seaside and board member at Clatsop Community College, for her service.



Carol Shepherd

Vigil honors memory of community leader

McKibbin had long resume of public service

By SCOTT HEWITT
The Columbian

VANCOUVER, Wash. — When John McKibbin came calling, you knew you needed to set aside some time and brain cells and get ready for something big. Clark County Commissioner Marc Boldt said pad and paper was always a good idea.

"There was so much energy and so much information coming from him," Boldt told a vigil in honor of McKibbin on Saturday evening.

Mark Matthias, the owner of Beaches restaurant and a frequent



John McKibbin, a community leader in Vancouver, Wash., was killed in a plane crash in the Columbia River last week.

Kim Blau
The Columbian

McKibbin collaborator, said every time McKibbin asked for a few minutes of his time, he knew he wouldn't emerge for hours. He and McKibbin were supposed to have a meeting on Thursday, he said, and there was comedic negotiation by email as the two busy men settled

upon exactly 9½ minutes of face time.

"I know that 9½-minute meeting would have been the best 2½ hours of my week," Matthias said.

Hundreds of people turned out

See VIGIL, Page 12A

See LIBERTY, Page 7A