

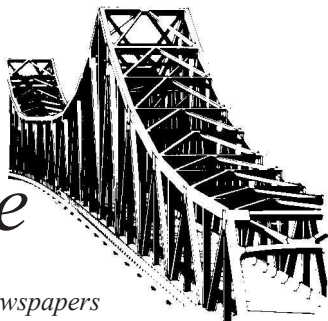
# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

### 10 years ago this week — 2006

When high school student Jamie Esteva arrived home from school last Tuesday, his parents weren't there.

And they didn't come home later.

Employees of fishery operations at the Port of Chinook, Wash., the 14-year-old's parents were picked up during Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids last weekend arrested for being in the country illegally.

His mother came home late in the week after paying a few thousand dollars, although she still faces charges. Esteva doesn't know where his father is.

And he's not alone. He knows at least five other local students affected by last week's raids.

Esteva's situation poses a growing concern to his classmates at Astoria High School. With an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 Oregon children born in the United States to parents who didn't come here legally, stricter immigration enforcement could mean more destruction to families.

Students and community members gathered outside Clatsop County Courthouse Friday to protest legislation that would make illegal immigration a felony. Further demonstrations are planned nationwide today, including in Cannon Beach.

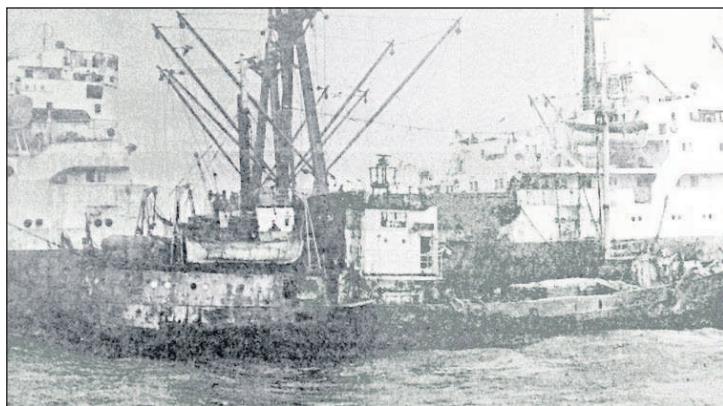
**The Clatsop County Public Works Department is enacting a more environmentally friendly spray program for weed-control along county roads.**

**After a lengthy review the department is switching to chemical herbicides that are less potentially harmful to streams and wetlands and making other changes to its methods of clearing roadsides of unwanted vegetation.**

Downtown Astoria has enough parking spaces at all times of the day and evening, the Astoria City Council heard Monday night.

That's the conclusion of a downtown parking study that is nearing completion.

### 50 years ago — 1966



Russian trawl fleet begins operations off Columbia.

John Wedin, executive secretary of the Congress of American Fishermen told the Oregon Otter Trawl commission Friday the Russian encroachment is really nothing new, but their type of operation is entirely different and is "something we will have to seriously consider."

Wedin was featured speaker at the OTCO's semi-annual meeting at Astoria city hall.

"We have attempted to get a man on board a Russian trawler to photograph their operation, but have been unsuccessful at this point," Wedin told the commission.

"What we need is immediate information on net mesh sizes and other equipment," he continues. "All of the pertinent data we can gather will be presented at a meeting at Washington, D.C., May 18-19 on senate bill 2218, which proposes to extend the territorial limit to 12 miles."

The Russian Factory ship Churkin Friday was joined by several trawlers on bottom fishing grounds about 12 miles west of the Columbia River entrance.

Don Nichols, skipper of the 65-foot Astoria-based trawler Linda Don, spotted the Russian vessels about dawn Friday.

Fishermen expressed fear Thursday the Russians may have depleted bottom fishing grounds off the central Oregon coast during the past three weeks they have operated there and are planning to set up operations off the Columbia River.

### 75 years ago — 1941

More than one thousand fishing boats took to the Columbia River from The Dalles to the sea today at noon as the 1941 commercial fishing season opened two days prior to the statutory opening date of May 1.

Reports of heavy Chinook escapement during the past two weeks at Bonneville dam led fleets of gillnet boats to sail for upriver drifts. It is always a gamble on the first day, even more than during the rest of the days of fishing, where to find the Royal Chinook.

Concentration of about 12,000 troops at Camp Clatsop is planned by the army, preparatory to sending them to Alaska within the next five months when housing is expected to be available, according to united Press dispatches today from Washington, D.C.

Astoria's rapidly expanding building program, aided materially by a recent issuance of a \$35,000 building permit for the construction of 10 new homes on Niagara Avenue under the sponsorship of Charles Miller, soared far above the 1940 figure to this date.

# How the death of a bandleader reflected upon a long-ago era

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

BY  
R.J.  
MARX



In the 1940s, Seaside was witness to a curious and disturbing incident.

Despite an abundance of musical clubs and dance halls — Club Monterey, The Lodge and the Bungalow — race relations were tense.

Oregon's Democratic Sen. Wayne Morse, a champion of civil and labor rights, joined progressive politicians in calling for equal rights for all races with the passage of a national Civil Rights Act.

Many Oregonians — including the editor of the *Seaside Signal* in a 1948 editorial — feared Morse's stance would create a backlash and lead to "even more terrible persecution in America."

In the '40s, Sandy Winnett worked as a waitress at the ice cream shop adjacent to the Bungalow. Today she is a volunteer at the Seaside Museum and Historical Society.

Winnett remembers an "open-minded attitude" among most Seaside residents, a time when people of all backgrounds "came to dance" in Seaside.

"Dancing in those days was a much bigger social event than it is today," added longtime Seaside resident and author Gloria Stiger Linkey. "We danced every Friday night at the high school. After the basketball and football games, we had a dance. We danced all the time."

Linkey remembered a time when teens would drive their cars — or their parents' cars — to Seaside's Cove, turn their radios on and dance through the night by the beach.

### A mysterious death

It was into this environment that bandleader and alto saxophonist Jimmie Lunceford arrived in July 1947 to play the Bungalow, the city's pre-eminent dance hall.

It wasn't just white bands like Glenn Miller and Tex Beneke that headlined Seaside's top club, but groups like Lionel Hampton, Cab Calloway and Fats Waller.

"To the local teenagers, the Bungalow was heaven," Lunceford's biographer Eddy Determeyer wrote.

Lunceford was considered to be on an equal with Count Basie and Duke Ellington, Linkey said. "He had a master's degree in music. He was a very educated man."

But Lunceford's arrival was said to be anything but civil. Lunceford and his band were an all-black ensemble, although Lunceford had in the past led integrated bands.

Rumors have circulated throughout the years that a racist restaurant owner poisoned Lunceford.

According to accounts presented in his biography of Lunceford, 2009's *Music is Our Business*, Lunceford's musicians learned the Bungalow dance was to be played for a segregated crowd — whites only.

Management asked Lunceford's black valet to stand out front and discourage black couples who came to purchase tickets from buying: "They don't want to sell to people like us."

Lunceford band bass player Truck Parham remembered that band members walked into a restaurant on Downing, not far from the Bungalow.

On scanning the group, the waitress is said to have told the musicians: "Can't serve you. We don't have no food."

Determeyer writes that Lunceford, normally even-tempered, even restrained, pounded the table with his fists.

"What the hell do you mean, you can't serve us?!" Lunceford demanded. "Call the manager!"

The waitress panicked and hurried back to the kitchen.

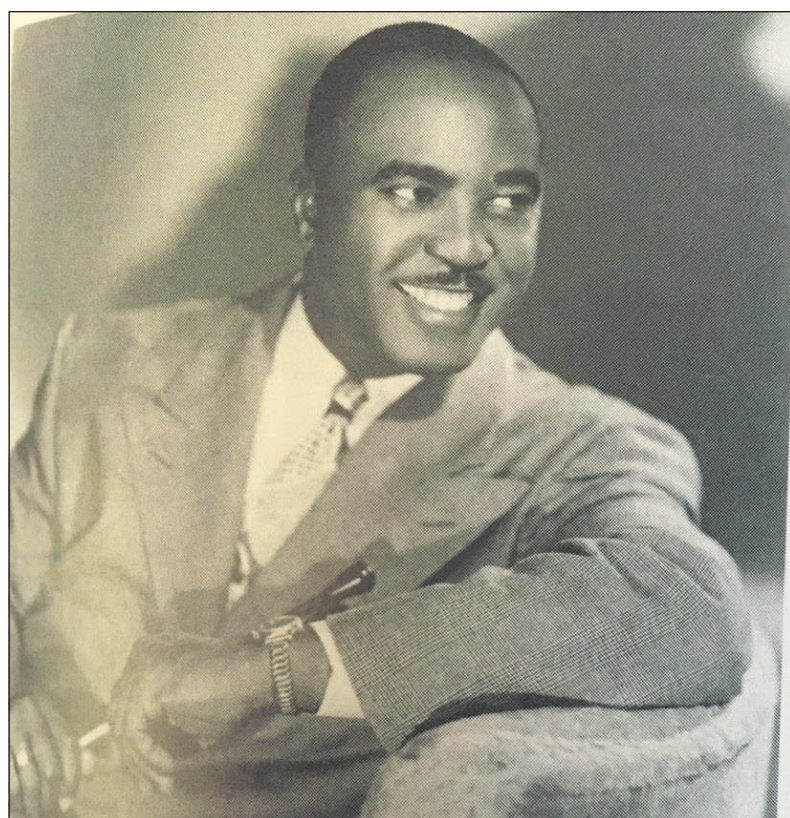
After a minute or two, Determeyer wrote, she came back and said the men could order after all.

The guys ordered hamburgers. "No, I'm sorry," the waitress said. "We don't have nothing but beef sandwiches, hot beef sandwiches."

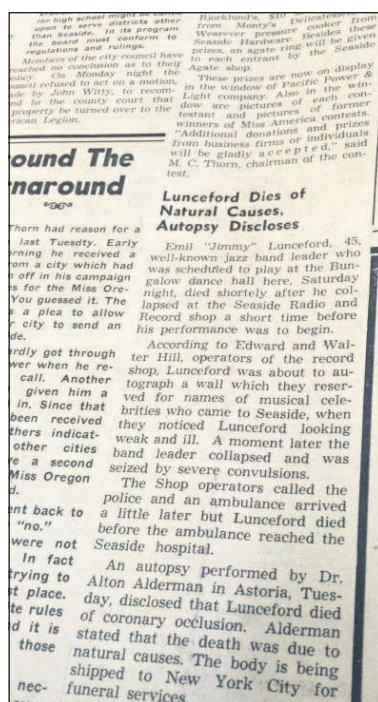
The grumbling musicians ordered the sandwiches, with the exception of bassist Truck Parham.

"The rest of the band ate it," Parham said. "Lunceford had it."

Parham left without eating.



Jimmie Lunceford



The Daily Astorian/File Photo  
The *Seaside Signal* reports Jimmie Lunceford's death in a July 1947 edition.

## Rumors circulated throughout the years that a racist restaurant owner poisoned Lunceford.

According to Determeyer's account, after the meal, the band members returned to the Bungalow, except for Lunceford, who complained he was tired and wasn't feeling well.

He headed across the street to Callahan's Radio and Record Shop at 411 Broadway, next to the Broadway Café, to autograph albums for fans.

There Lunceford collapsed and died. He was 46 years old.

### End of an era

According to the news story in the July 1947 *Signal*, Lunceford was about to autograph Callahan's record store wall, reserved for musical celebrities who came to Seaside, when owners Edward and Walter Hill noticed the bandleader looking weak and ill.

A moment later Lunceford collapsed and was seized by severe convulsions, according to the newspaper's report.

The owners called the police and an ambulance, but Lunceford died before reaching Seaside hospital.

The show, despite Lunceford's death, went on that night, Determeyer wrote, but one musician after the other left the bandstand and headed to the restroom.

"I'm the only one that didn't get sick," Parham said. "Botulism, you know."

Lunceford, a teetotaler, was "a perfectly healthy man who had boxed, run track and played softball," according to trumpeter Joe Wilder. "It was one of the saddest days of my life."

At the request of his wife, Crystal, Lunceford's body was flown to New York City for the funeral service.

The leader was buried in Memphis, his hometown.

A memorial service with remaining band members took place that week at Rockaway Beach, the last concert before the Lunceford Orchestra permanently disbanded.

But before long, Determeyer

wrote, "the myth surrounding Lunceford's death was in full swing."

The Clatsop County Coroner declared Lunceford died of "coronary occlusion, due to thrombosis of anterior coronary artery due to arteriosclerosis" — in other words a heart attack caused by a blockage.

Determeyer's telling casts doubt on the coroner's report.

"Simple, plain racism is really the key word here," Determeyer said via email last week.

### Controversy lingers

But Seaside residents and even a jazz musicologist, disagree.

Seaside's Linkey thinks it's not plausible Lunceford and his bandmates were sickened or worse, or even turned away.

"Oh, he was served," Linkey said. "There was no animosity. No racism at all. At least growing up in Seaside, I didn't feel it."

As a tourist town, the goal was to sell as many tickets as possible, she said. "Because if you can serve tourists, you can serve an African-American."

Linkey added the biographer "takes giant leaps" in suggesting a racial incident was a factor in Lunceford's death.

Linkey said while there "weren't many blacks in the area," there were no segregated dances. "We did have African-Americans in the summer from Portland. There was an influx during World War II. They worked in the shipyards."

Seaside's Mary Cornell, who attended dances since she was in eighth grade in the war years, said people of all ages were welcome at the Bungalow. She said she never saw anyone turned away. African-Americans also came to Gearhart and Seaside as domestics for wealthy families, Cornell said.

Sandy Winnett said Determeyer's account was "extremely unlikely."

Even a jazz musicologist, Lewis Porter, pianist, Rutgers University professor and author of *Jazz: From Its Origins to the Present*, doubts the poisoning rumor.

"It was probably not a good idea for Determeyer to throw in at the very last sentence of the chapter that Jimmie may have been poisoned by being black," Porter said via email.

Botulism is not a poison and cannot be "manufactured" or "planted," Porter said. "It's simply a severe form of food poisoning that can occur in, for example, rotten meal. But he (Lunceford) died from a heart attack — nothing to do with the food! He's not the first guy to die suddenly at a relatively young age from unsuspected heart trouble, especially in those days."

Poisoning is not the only rumor to survive surrounding the cause of Lunceford's death, which range from "Lunceford ate a double portion of chili con carne while on tour and died almost immediately" to a theory he was shot by a gangster while signing records at Callahan's.

Lunceford band member Truck Parham died in 2002. Trumpeter Joe Wilder died in 2014. With them go their eyewitness accounts.

Are the still lingering suspicions about the Lunceford death akin to the mistrust so many black Americans still feel about the police and other authorities?

Maybe the best way to reflect upon this incident is by stressing the goal of diversity that Lunceford, progressive politicians like Sen. Wayne Morse and Seaside's young music lovers of the 1940s — in love with the bands, the swing and the dance — were so desperately attempting to foster.

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