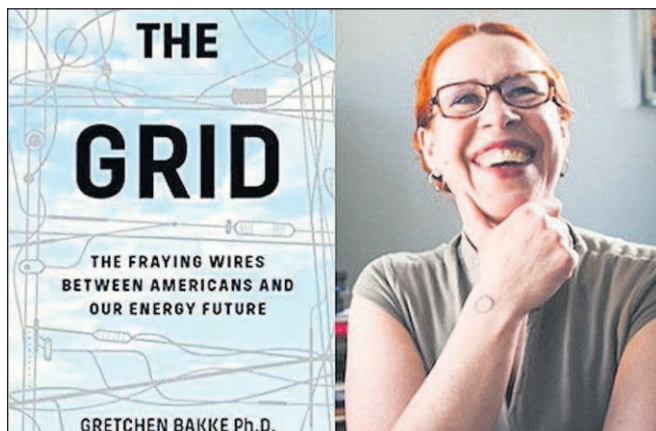


‘THE MACHINE IS EVERYWHERE’



Julie Swensen sent in a tip that Gretchen Bakke, daughter of Jean Jand Michael McGonigle of Astoria — who is also an Astoria High School graduate and a Ph.D — received a favorable review of her new book, “The Grid: The Fraying Wires Between Americans and Our Energy Future,” from the **National Post** recently (<http://tinyurl.com/bakke1>).

The review, in short, says her book “illustrates the right way to fix what’s wrong with the future of energy.” Which is no small task, but she does it admirably. Bakke is pictured, courtesy of **PublishersWeekly.com**, which did an extended podcast interview with her, which you can listen to at <http://tinyurl.com/bakke2>.

So what exactly is the grid? It’s a machine. “The machine is everywhere,” she explained. “The machine is the battery in your cell phone and the machine is the outlet and the plug you put into it. The machine is the lines that go out to the poles on the streets or under the ground, depending on where you live, and just sort of go along the prairies or go through the mountains to where the electricity is generated. All of the power plants are interlocked within each of these giant grids ...

“All of the power is moving around from power plant to transmission line to distribution lines that have these transformers that bring the voltage down to a level that won’t kill you if you touch it, into your outlet, into your batteries of your computers and you carry it around in your pocket. That’s the grid. And the whole thing cycles back around. It’s a giant circle. So electricity doesn’t come from a place and end someplace else. It only works because it’s going through the system and going back to the point of origin.”

And that’s only a small part of the interview. Once you hear all of it, and learn about electrical power’s past and probable future, you’ll look at that light switch on the wall with new respect. And maybe a little glimmer of worry.

SWAN SONG

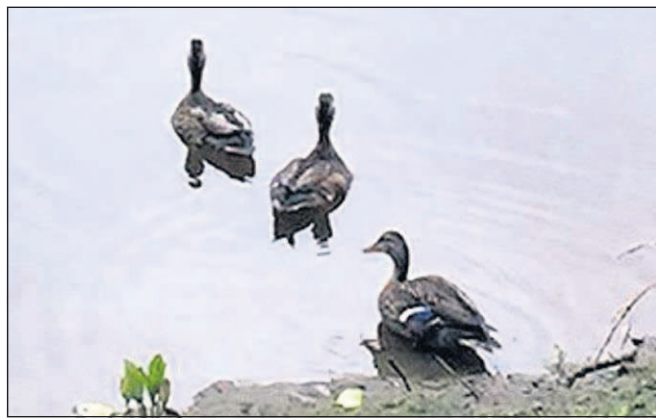


No, you’re not imagining things, there really are giant swans gliding along on the Necanicum River in Seaside, and you can thank **Wheel Fun Rentals** at Quatat Park. The shiny new paddle **Swan Boats** can hold four people or 750 pounds. They also have two six-person boats — paddled by four — that are rated for up to 1,400 pounds.

Want to take a spin? Boats are available for rent from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., weather permitting.

Feeling nostalgic, and can’t bear to see the former swan boats these new ones replaced go to that great rummage bin in the sky? Anyone interested in buying the older two and four person boats should contact Wheel Fun Rentals at 503-738-8447.

I’LL BE BACK



“We raised three orphaned **Mallard ducklings** and were pleased to have a picture perfect release on Wednesday afternoon,” the **Wildlife Center of the West Coast** (www.coastwildlife.org) posted on their Facebook page Aug. 13, along with photos (one is shown) of the ducklings scooting merrily out of the cage into the grass, then swimming off into the sunset without a backward glance. Happy ending, right?

“Imagine our surprise Thursday morning,” the post continues, “to find one of them waiting patiently for breakfast at the door of his enclosure!”

Who says you can’t go home again?

In One Ear



by Elleda Wilson

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A MILLION TONS OF ROCK



Every now and then the Ear decides to give an old story another run. Since the South Jetty is ever-fascinating, here’s one originally published Friday, Sept. 5, 2014:

Some time ago, **Jack Buckmeir** emailed copies of two pages of the **Jan. 15, 1898**, edition of the weekly **Scientific American** (\$3 a year) featuring an article about the completion of the **South Jetty** at the mouth of the Columbia River. You can read the original story at <http://tinyurl.com/sjet1>

The plan was for the jetty to restrict the outflowing water, causing it to speed up, and at the same time “scour out” a deeper channel to the ocean. The shipping vessels of the day needed more than the 18- to 21-foot depth available, and the jetty would create a 30-foot deep channel at low water. It should be noted, though, that shifting sands soon caused a whole new set of problems with the depth of the channel.

The work began in 1885. A “jet” pile driver was used to construct the double track pile trestle used haul the brush “mattresses” (part of the foundation) and rock fill, and an enormous hydraulic pile driver with a rotating platform was also built. The rock for the jetty was quarried on the banks of the Columbia, towed in barges to the jetty docks, and hoisted by steam derricks onto “self-righting dump cars.” Amazingly, two men could dump 20 rock-filled cars in five minutes. An image from the article, of men dumping rocks onto the mattresses, is shown.

OK, some South Jetty facts and figures: The jetty includes “over half a million lineal feet of piling, nearly 4 million feet of sawed lumber and about one million tons of rock,” the article said. Originally projected to be 4.5 miles long, the jetty was later extended to 5 miles out to sea.

The project came in at an unbelievable 45 percent of the original estimate, or \$2,025,650 (about \$58 million now) — an accomplishment that would be unthinkable now, not to mention impossible.

NOW YOU SEE IT



There’s was an intriguing history project going on in June that the Ear bets very few know about. And if it weren’t for **Amy Stocky** taking note of the Adobe Create newsletter (<http://tinyurl.com/adobesigns>), the Ear wouldn’t, either.

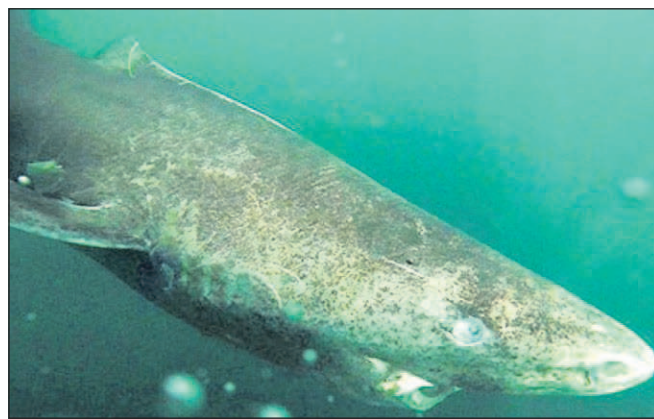
Craig Winslow is one of **Adobe’s 2016–2017 Creative Residents**, and he came to Astoria to work on a project to decipher the letters of the commercial signs in two layers of paint on the side of an old building. He calls them “ghost signs,” because all that is visible are some faded outlines and patches of paint. Using Adobe graphics programs, a lot of historical research and some informed guesswork, he recreated the signs. A screenshot from the newsletter showing part of the process is shown.

Aside from the Clatsop County Historical Society and the Astoria Library’s larder of microfiche, city directories and maps provided many clues as to what the original signs said. “The maps in the Sanborn survey books are so detailed,” he noted. “They show the town’s businesses and who owned what, where things were, and what the structures were made of.”

“With the Astoria project, I was sort of finding my process,” Winslow explained. “The sleuthing and detective work really became a focus, and I was surprised at how much information was out there — part of what I’m figuring out now is just how long I want to spend on research, because it could really go on forever.”

“I’m trying to make these as authentic as possible,” he added. “When there’s nothing to go off of, I’ll leave it blank, but if I can rationalize a choice, I will — I don’t want to bastardize the history, but I don’t want to have a blank sign either. I have to take some license ... it’s exciting to bring history to life.”

AGE IS ONLY A (VERY BIG) NUMBER



Marine biology buffs should enjoy this tidbit: Scientists have recently discovered that the **Greenland shark** in the Arctic sea is the **oldest known living creature with a backbone**, able to live up to 400 years — and perhaps longer, **ScienceAlerts.com** reports (<http://tinyurl.com/shark400>). One of the sharks is pictured, courtesy of Julius Nielsen/Science.

The oldest shark of 28 studied was calculated to be at least 272 years old, and possibly as old as 512. The age was calculated by radiocarbon dating the layers of crystallized proteins in the lenses of their eyes. It’s not an exact science, by any means, but even so, no vertebrate even comes close to the age of the youngest shark found.

So, if you think about it, Greenland sharks who are alive right now could have been swimming happily when Lewis and Clark were exploring on the North Coast. Also consider that the sharks, which mature to about 16 feet long, grow less than an inch a year, and aren’t even fertile until they’re 150 years old.

Side note: The only longer-lived critter is an invertebrate — a clam — the ocean quahog, that’s been dated to at least 507 years old.

“Probably whatever sort of physiological tricks the sharks ... and the quahogs have to live that long, they’re probably something that humans don’t have,” Julius Nielsen, from the University of Copenhagen told NPR. “But it’s something that, if we discover what it is, we might be able to adapt it to human use.”

JUST A CONJECTURE?



Sean Astin is at it again, answering questions about a “**Goonies**” sequel at **Nickel City Con**, a comic convention in Buffalo, New York, that took place last weekend. He is pictured, in a photo from his Facebook page.

“My feeling is now that it’s going to be rebooted — just a conjecture — like ‘Ghostbusters,’ where it’s going to be a whole new cast, a proper reboot and we’ll all get cameos in it,” he told The Buffalo News. “That’s what I think will happen, and I’m sort of OK with it now. I really wanted it to be a continuation, but I sort of feel like reading the tea leaves of the way culture is, and how long it’s been, that’s where my feeling is.”

The question remains: Is it really just a conjecture?

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD



An interesting local history tidbit from the Cannon Beach History Center and Museum was posted on their Facebook page recently, and the accompanying photo (shown) had this caption: “Undated photo of travelers on the old Ecola road enduring one of the 111 infamous hairpin turns.” Dramamine, anyone?

“Up until 1950, this nausea-causing road was the only way to get to Cannon Beach,” the post says. “The ‘new highway’ completed in 1950 finally eliminated all of those curves that had plagued anyone traveling to and from Cannon Beach.”

“The new road had several interesting effects. For one thing, up until the 1950s retirees had tended to shun Cannon Beach because it had lacked medical facilities. Now, with travel time to Seaside and Astoria much reduced, that was less the case.”

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