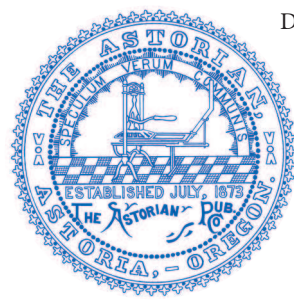


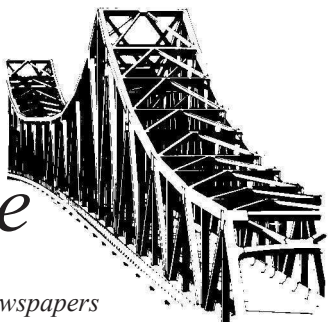
# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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

Longtime Boy Scout Robert Lovell, of Astoria, remembers when he first joined Troop 211.

The country was in a depression, and activities for young men were limited. But even without video games and teen athletics, he found a place in the Boy Scouts.

Lovell was one of the first to earn the rank of Eagle Scout after Boy Scout Troop 211 was chartered in 1921. The longtime Astoria Port Commissioner and businessman, who operated Lovell Auto in Downtown Astoria for decades, was scout master for the troop in the 1950s. He is still registered as an active Scouter today.

"We didn't have all these opportunities," Lovell says. "We got by for very little money and homemade equipment."

Today's Troop 211 boys have a very different experience than Lovell's low-budget outings.

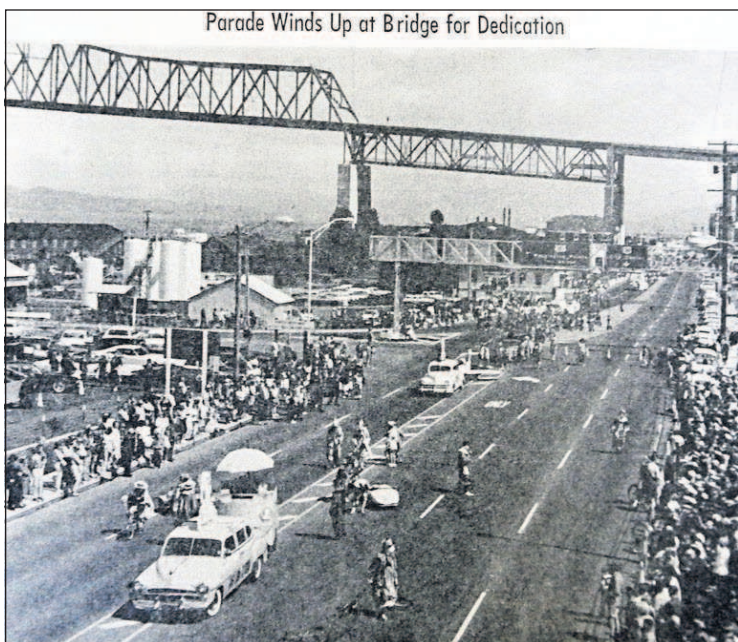
"It's much more high-tech," Lovell says. "We were lucky to have pup tents."

Wednesday evening, several generations of Troop 211 will come together at the Astoria Masonic Temple to celebrate 85 years of Scouting on the North Coast.

**A multimillion-dollar National Science Foundation grant to Oregon Health & Sciences University, announced today, will put a team of robotic research tools into the Columbia River to help scientists monitor and predict underwater conditions.**

**The tools will be able to measure currents, temperatures and sea-floor composition and compile real-time data that will improve day-to-day understanding of the marine environment as well as long-term monitoring on the effects of climate change.**

### 50 years ago — 1966



It was a beautiful day after all for the Regatta grand land parade Saturday in spite of rain the weather bureau had forecast. The sun came out as about 15,000 people gathered in Astoria for the parade. Floats, marching bands, the famed Astoria Clowns, Al Kader drum and bugle corps, elected officials including the governors of Oregon and Washington participated. Entries came from all over the Pacific Northwest.

The parade progressed two hours through downtown Astoria, beginning near the old ferry slip and ending west of the new Astoria bridge.

Many entries used the theme of the new bridge as their motif, with many quite complicated in design. The Tongue Point Job Corps Center's bridge float was very large and symbolized the importance of the bridge to northwest economy.

**Inboard boats from Oregon and Washington competed at Cullaby Lake Sunday on a race course described by veteran racers as one of the best in Oregon.**

**Bill Muncey, well-known hydroplane driver, expected to drive a seven-liter limited type hydroplane owned by George Babcock of Seattle Sunday, but he didn't appear.**

**About 1,500 persons watched the races from the new county park at the south end of the lake.**

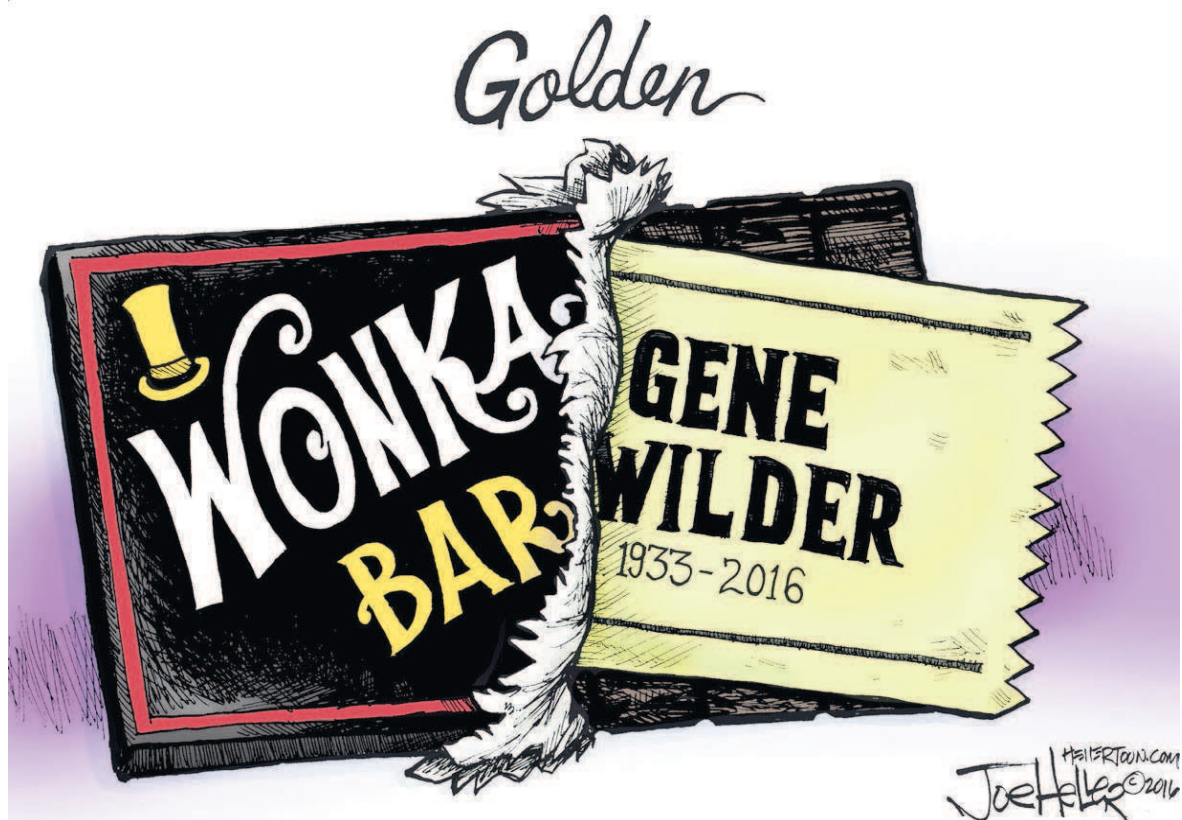
### 75 years ago — 1941

Mrs. Anna Boettiger, daughter of President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and wife of John Boettiger, publisher of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, established herself as a fisherman of ability equal to that of her famous father Tuesday and Wednesday when she pulled four Royal Chinook salmon from the Columbia River.

**Almost two score sailing boats from the Columbia and its tributaries, including several Crods, this afternoon jockeyed for position as the annual three-day Regatta races got under way in a faint breeze.**

**A gun on the Coast Guard cutter Onondaga sounded at 1:20 p.m. as a warning to the special cruising class boats, which are the largest entered, to be ready in 10 minutes. Following this class were the Crods, and in order, Bee class, class A handicap, class B handicap, and the Sea Scout ketches.**

For the first time in the short history of Astoria's young but mushrooming Salmon Derby a woman caught the heaviest fish in daily competition when at 6:30 Thursday night a 43 pound 5 ounce Chinook landed by Mrs. Ernest Barendse of Brownsmead stood supreme among the multitude weighed.



### SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

## Ralph Davis: marathoner, lifeguard, larger than life

By R.J. MARX  
*The Daily Astorian*

Ralph Davis was almost superhuman in the eyes of those at the beaches of Seaside and Gearhart. A strapping man who competed at every age, the Portland State University coach and Seaside lifeguard died Aug. 14.

Davis left his mark not only with the 250 lives he saved over his time on the beach, but as the founder of the Seaside Beach Run and Trail's End Marathon.

"He certainly was a notable figure on the North Coast," Cannon Beach's Peter Lindsey said. "He was a huge, lantern-jawed, strapping, fine, gentle, but rugged character, believe me."

"He and his wife, Betty, and their sons, Bryan and Scott, were lifeguards, first in Seaside, then Gearhart for many, many years when I was a child," Gearhart's Jeff Ter Har said, "He was just super nice, could talk to you forever, would do anything for you — just fabulous."

A lifelong Oregonian born in Portland in 1920, family members described Davis's athletic childhood along the Columbia River Gorge, where at a young age he constructed his own boat and tacked it against the wind.

That athleticism was to be a characteristic of his entire career, as a football player at the University of Oregon and Oregon State and later as a track and field coach at Portland State University.

#### Making his mark

On the North Coast, it was in Seaside as founder of the Beach Run and in Gearhart as a lifeguard that he made his mark.

Labor Day 1965 had seen the third consecutive year of unrest in Seaside, as papers described "hundreds of unruly youth who attempted unsuccessfully to take over the town." The city was an "armed camp," as Oregon State Police and National Guard put Seaside in virtual lockdown.

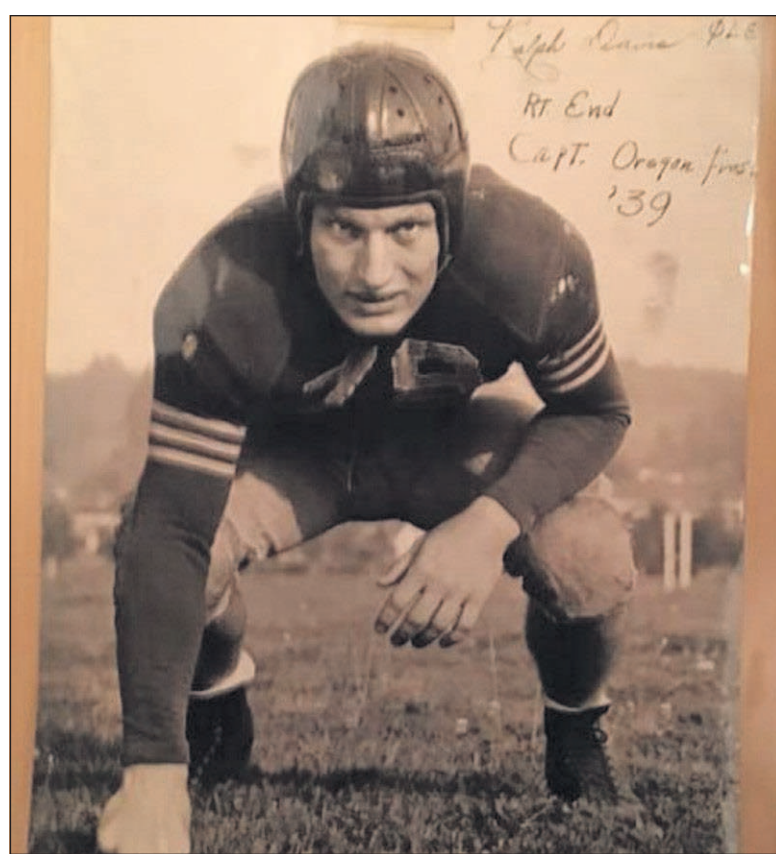
The July 1966 Seaside Beach Run was a response to the unrest, Jack Davis said. "Dad wanted to promote a more positive image of the community by organizing an 8-mile run."

"Ralph and Betty were an extraordinary, powerful couple that were really a true force of nature," recalled Seaside's Mary Blake, former long-time general manager of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District. Blake said. "They believed if you engaged people, they have a great time, instead of causing problems because they didn't have anything to do."

The American Athletic Union-sanctioned run started at the Turnaround, heading south to the Cove before returning north to Gearhart Beach and crossing the Necanicum River at low tide. The race ended with the final leg from Gearhart Beach to the Turnaround, again crossing the Necanicum.

That first year, a rainstorm shortened because the mouth of the river was "a little too wide and deep for the safety of the runners," according to the Seaside Signal at the time.

University of Oregon track star Jim Grelle — who ran in the 1960 Olympics for the United States — won the 7.5-mile loop with a time of 38 minutes, 32 seconds. "The tension in regular competition is extreme," Grelle told the Signal afterward. "This was fun."



Submitted Photo

Ralph Davis played football for the University of Oregon before World War II, and finished his college career with Oregon State University after the war.

#### Quick growth

The first run featured 44 runners participated; by the 1970s, that number grew to more than 1,200 participants.

"Every year, we had to redo the course because of the change in the estuary," Blake recalled one race when, because of high tides, runners were diverted over hot sand dunes. Another year, fog was so thick Blake and Davis patrolled the shorelines in a rig to protect runners who might stumble into the water.

"It was all done with volunteers," Bryan Davis said. "A lot of these volunteers were people that my dad taught or had experience in athletics. He could call upon them, and they really liked him and respected him and would pretty much do anything for him. They took positions timing things, recording things."

Today, the race is organized by Seaside Beach Run Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to providing fitness center memberships to Clatsop County's middle- and high-school students.

Ralph Davis's second major North Coast running event, the Trail's End Marathon was organized in the 1970s and took a complete 26-mile loop from Seaside to Cullaby Lake and back, starting at the Turnaround and ending at the Turnaround.

Ter Har said he likes to say he was the first to finish the marathon — "My claim to fame is I won it five times because I drove the lead car," he laughed.

#### 'Built like Tarzan'

An avid surfer, kids "looked up to dad like Duke Kamehameha," the lifeguard god, Scott Davis said. "He was very athletic. He had a good stature. His body was built like Tarzan."

Ralph Davis was one of the first people to ride a surfboard in Seaside and his strength in the water was renowned — strong enough to single-handedly clear logs or tow them away.

"The high school kids in the area would come down to the beach and my dad would during his breaks would organize touch football," Jack Davis said. "It was a lot of fun. He never thought of himself being the age that he was. He always thought of himself as much younger. Even in his 80s or 90s he didn't want to go to someplace where 'the old people were.'"

There was no lifeguard tower at the Gearhart beach, Ter Har remembered, so patrols were on foot or in the jeep.

Cannon Beach's Lindsey recalled Ralph Davis as his water safety instructor at Portland State. "I was a pimply-faced 19, 20-year-old, slightly blind person," Lindsey said. "He was about 240 pounds, all gristle and muscle. One of the things he would do would require you to rescue him."

One of Davis's major accomplishments was to organize lifeguard crews to request state funding. "The state actually disbursed an amount of money to communities to buy trucks and lifesaving equipment," Lindsey said.

#### Volleyball challenge

Once Davis and the Gearhart lifeguards challenged the Cannon Beach lifeguards to a volleyball game on Pacific Way.

"When we arrived to meet the challenge, we get down on the beach," Lindsey said. "He was there with his wife and son and a couple of other team members. One gentleman was sitting there — Ralph introduced us and his voice sounded very familiar. It turned out to be this fellow named Adam West — Batman on television. His mother owned an old hotel in Gearhart. He was having a martini, visiting. We beat them, by Jove, but we laughed about it afterward."

In the 1970s, Ralph Davis became "one of the pioneers of korfbal" in the United States — a "sort of Dutch version of basketball," according to Lindsey. Around here, some people call it pickleball, former park district manager Blake said.

"You can live your life with this aliveness and joy, and really being in the moment, and he and Betty were the absolute representation of that," she said. "They beamed. Ralph had that smile, physique, this attitude, this knowingness — it was an absolute pleasure to be around them."

"The thing about growing old is, you don't have to get old," she added. "That's the magic. He was able to do that. He just didn't age."

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