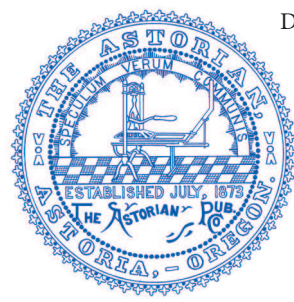


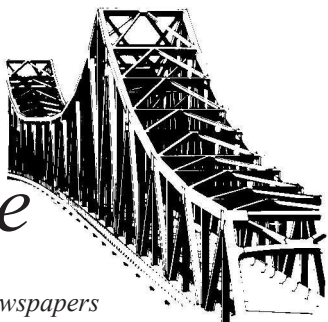
# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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

Wildlife Biologist Kirsten Brennan is familiar with the Leadbetter Point refuge. She spends a lot of time there, keeping an eye on the progress of the Western snowy plover, a small brown and white shorebird listed as endangered in Washington state.

But on Sept. 5, she noticed something she had not seen before — a rare plant that had not been seen for about 56 years.

To help the recovery of the plover, efforts are under way to restore the bird's habitat. Invasive European beach grass has been scraped away and oyster shells spread over the exposed sand, ideal for the plovers' nesting needs and similar to the open windswept sand dunes which once existed.

Brennan was watching for the plovers when she noticed the plant. It grew low to the ground, gripping the sand. Interspersed among the thick, waxy green leaves were pink clusters of flowers, like small balls of trumpets facing outward, no bigger than a thumb.

"I felt stunned," she said.

Brennan had found some pink sandverbena. The last time anyone had seen the plant in Washington was in the early 1940s. In Washington, pink sandverbena is listed as "extirpated." Once widespread, it is considered endangered in Oregon, threatened or endangered in California, and a "species of concern," by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

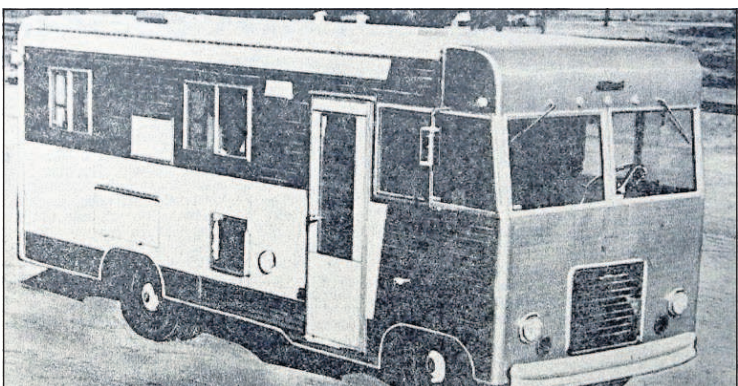
Wind and rain have worn the red off its walls, loosened the wooden slats that bind it together and left it pockmarked and sagging like an old barn.

The Red Building is the last structure from the Union Fishermen's Cooperative Packing Co. still standing on the waterfront. Its patchy red frame sits on the pilings south of the Cannery Pier Hotel.

People from the Washington coast to Washington, D.C., are lining up to buy space in this building. They are picturing white tablecloths and fine wine under its slouched roof and ballroom dancing on its battered wood floors. Young couples are touring the loft inside, where bird droppings cover the ground, and reserving the space for their wedding day.

Local entrepreneurs Ryan Davis and Shawn Helligso are transforming the former cannery maintenance shop into a shopping square with a banquet hall upstairs and rows of tall windows overlooking the Columbia River.

### 50 years ago — 1966



Home and car combination will be on display Tuesday and Wednesday in Astoria. It includes all conveniences of home.

Several gillnetters last week found fish that apparently were dying but showed no visible sign of injury, according to William Puustinen, Columbia River Fishermen's union official.

Puustinen said he caught a salmon which would sink, then struggle to the surface, flap its gills rapidly, then sink again. He turned it over to Oregon Fish commission laboratory for study.

Japanese fishing boats will drop 200 cider bottles into the Pacific Ocean off Hawaii next month in an unusual type of mail service.

The bottles will be empty except for containing letters from Japanese school children here seeking pen pals from Mexico and the United States.

The children hope the ocean currents will carry their bottled letters to the West Coast of America and Mexico.

Three boats of the state's ferry fleet will be up for public auction Oct. 12, Oregon Highway Department has reported.

Alaska Development company, which put up down payment on the boats Tourist 3 and Tourist 2 at an auction sale several weeks ago, has decided not to complete the deal, forfeited its down payment, and turned the boats back to the highway department. They will be offered again for sale.

### 75 years ago — 1941

In high spirits in more ways than one over the huge run of salmon in the river, Arthur Michael Lehto, a Saturday night celebrant, was arrested by city police at Thirty Third Street and Waterfront for breaking car windows in his own car.

Patrolman B. Mathre was dispatched to the scene where he found Lehto armed with rocks he was throwing with as deliberate aim as he could muster at the windows of a car. Before Mathre could stop Lehto the back window shattered under the impact of a well directed toss.

Police were unable to explain why Lehto was firing at his own machine. Their only guess was that he didn't realize it was his own car. Mathre's report noted that Lehto was "feeling very good" and was well provisioned to continue in his happy mood.

He was booked for disorderly conduct and released on \$15 bail.



### SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# The tale of the tail-less whale

By R.J. MARX  
*The Daily Astorian*

ARCH CAPE — Thanks to Court Carrier of the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce for rousting me from an end-of-week stupor with the news that a dead whale was making its way toward Arch Cape.

Carrier graciously offered us a parking spot at his house — which in Arch Cape is a big deal.

But just as we were winging past Tolovana, Carrier texted to say the whale had been swept south. He advised me to go through the tunnel and take it from there. You can



never really tell where a whale will come to land. So my intrepid spouse — did I mention this was our 28th wedding anniversary? — accompanied me through the Arch Cape Tunnel in the early evening mist seeking a dead whale driven in the tide.

I figured my best bet was to turn right to Cape Falcon, not far past the southern end of the bridge. You don't really understand how rugged and deep this terrain is until you drive it in the dark. We drove to where we could see to the ocean, parked the car and I winged it down to the shore.

In the cove, don't take anything for granted. If you can find an entrance to the beach, you have to slip and slide on your butt or take a flying leap from the sideline. Don't ever trust a branch or root to hold your weight. The cobble beach is slippery even when the tide is out and you need to dance a ballet on tiptoes. While I was scrambling around I heard voices and was joined by a couple more curious folks. Word traveled fast. All we were missing were tom-toms.

We skirted beyond the cobbled rock and onto the sandy beach.

At 7:30 the light was so dim I couldn't get a good shot with my iPhone. Even with binoculars, all I could see was the blurry horizon. But everyone saw the lumpy gray blip in the water. In that dim weird light what we saw was what looked like a latex rubber giant hot-air balloon bouncing on the waves and getting bigger, bigger — much, much bigger.

As we were backing up to the cobble rocks again as the sand receded and the water inched closer and our socks got damp, the big latex balloon was looking more and more like ... a giant rat. Dead or alive, I didn't want to be within 50 yards of this thing.

Little did I know it could have exploded.

There was nothing to do but skittle back to safety and come back in the morning.

#### The next day

What I saw at 9 that morning was pretty incredible. It was the inverted belly of the whale all puffed up into a balloon-like sac.

Would it, could it explode?

Seaside Aquarium's Keith Chandler has been chasing whales, dead or alive, for decades. In 2003 a 17-ton gray whale washed to shore just as the Seaside Volleyball Tournament was about to close. Chan-



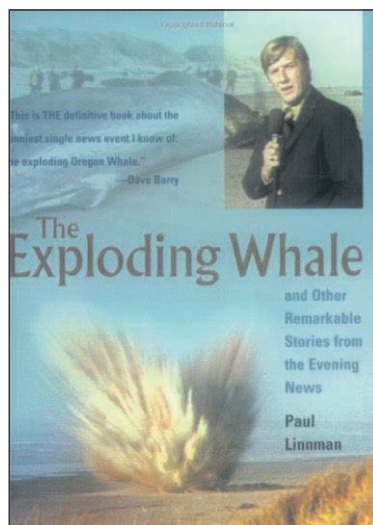
Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian

Researchers examine the humpback on Short Sand Beach. Seaside Aquarium's Keith Chandler is in the light blue shirt.



L.M. Smith/For EO Media Group

L.M. Smith was among the onlookers on Cove Beach as the whale washed up in September.



Submitted Photo

Paul Linnman's contact with the "exploding whale" was to define his career.

Chandler was there. In February 2004, the head of a sperm whale washed up on Indian Beach. In late January this year, a dead 24-foot humpback whale washed ashore Sunday in Seaside. Chandler was there, too.

"The bloat is the gas that built up inside," Chandler said on the day of the latest beaching. "Is that a risk? Could it explode? It could. They have in the past. Not saying it will, but it's always a possibility."

I was completely unaware of the legendary Portland television news reporter Paul Linnman, who in 1970 was showered with whale carcass after the humpback was dynamited by the state highway department to get it off the Florence beach. Linnman wore that story as his signature.

And there are no shortage of graphic videos on the web, including the 2004 Taiwanese incident when a decomposing sperm whale splattered onlookers in an explosion as it was being transported for a post-mortem examination.

That early Saturday morning, I snapped as many pictures of the freaky-deaky whale as I could against the incoming tide, blissfully unaware of the worsening bloat and its potentially dire consequences. And equally unaware of the tide licking at my feet, enough to make me scamper up the rocks and through somebody's backyard to the street.

Lo and behold, shortly after leaving the beach, that belly did burst — whether it was with a bang or a whimper I don't know — mounds of undigested krill deposited in the shallow waters of Cove Beach.

By mid-afternoon, the tide pulled the dead, now deflated whale back into the water and back to sea. All that was left was a pile of krill and fish remains. I am told that the stench lingered.

Two days later, the whale was swept to Short Sand Beach in Oswald West State Park, 2 miles south of where the whale had washed up over the weekend. Chandler and researchers finished taking tissue and blood samples a few days later. The necropsy took place on the beach, where the whale carcass will remain.

"There's really no way to get it off that beach because you can't get equipment there, and you can't get enough sand to bury it," Chandler said.

Will it smell?  
 "It will have an odor," Chandler said. "But I've smelled worse."

So now I've got to a whale story of my own. Is it up to Paul Linnman's? Maybe not, but that's OK. There are certain experiences far better seen on YouTube.

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