County firefighters answer call to help California

Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department

A dozen firefighters from Clatsop County have been sent to Ventura County, Calif., to fight growing wildfires. From left to right: Amy Lenz, Brandin Smith, Flint Helligso, Justin Perdew, Tanner Rich, Chris Dugan, Ron Tyson, Dallas Ritchie, Genesee Dennis. Front row: Matt Benedict, Angels Perez and Katie Bulletset.

A dozen were sent to fight blazes

By BRENNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County firefighters were among the many from Oregon deployed to help Southern California battle multiple blazes Wednesday morning.

A dozen firefighters from six departments around the county will be teamed up with another task force from Marion County and spend at least 16 days fighting fires in Ventura County near Los Angeles, said Lewis & Clark Fire Chief Jeff Golightly. Firefighters include Ron Tyson of Olney Walluski Fire & Rescue District; Amy Lenz, Dallas Ritchie and Justin Perdew of Knappa Fire District; Brandin Smith and Flint Helligso of Lewis & Clark Fire Department; Tanner Rich and Angels Perez of Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department; Chris Dugan, Genesee Dennis and Katie Bulletset of Seaside Fire Department and Cannon Beach Fire Chief Matt Benedict.

This will be the third time local firefighters will have deployed this year to aid with fires outside of the county.

As of Wednesday, multiple fires have prompted officials to issue evacuation orders for nearly 200,000 people in Southern California and have destroyed nearly 200 homes, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. According to the office of the Oregon State Fire Marshal, 150 Oregon firefighters are in California.

Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy said two of his firefighters are on the task force, and said he was happy Clatsop County could help.

"During our summer, the state of California sent resources to Oregon to assist us in our fight, we are proud to be able to return the favor and hope we can make a difference," Eddy said.

At the Gearhart City Council meeting Wednesday, Mayor Matt Brown asked firefighters to be safe and praised their readiness to serve in the midst of the holiday season.

"They're so ready to go and serve, even though some of them are going to be there possibly until Christmas," Brown said. "They didn't even hesitate to say, 'Hey, we're going down to help out.'"

Troy Aaron and Baden James Biddle

Oct. 22, 1965 — Nov. 25, 2017
Sept. 12, 2004 — Nov. 25, 2017
Bainbridge Island, Washington

Troy Biddle, 52, and Baden Biddle, 13, passed away on Nov. 25, 2017, in a car accident in San Pablo, California, in which Troy's brother-in-law and Baden's uncle, Daryl Horn, 50, and Troy's nephew and Baden's cousin, Joseph Horn, 14, also died.

Baden James and Troy Aaron Biddle

The family had been together over the holiday weekend, and were driving home from an annual father-son basketball tournament, when the car driven by Jared Horn, 19, who survived the accident, was struck by another car. By all accounts, everyone had an amazing day at the tournament, not only playing basketball but also laughing, making new friends, and reconnecting with others.

Troy was born in 1965 and raised in Astoria, Oregon. He graduated from Astoria High School in 1983, earned his bachelor of science degree from the University of Oregon in 1988, and a juris doctorate from Willamette University in 1998. As a lifelong Ducks fan, while at UO, Troy was also an active member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, where he made a number of close friends.

Troy attended Willamette School of Law, following a career with Durham & Bates in Portland, Oregon, and in Seattle, Washington, where he started the company's first maritime insurance practice. It was at the first day of law school orientation, in 1995, when he met and became friends with Amanda Horn, who years later he would marry.

Following law school, they both clerked for the Lane County Circuit Court judges, lived in Redondo Beach and practiced law in Southern California, and ultimately settled in Bainbridge Island, Washington, in 2007 to raise their two children, Baden James Biddle and Devon Isabel Biddle.

While he practiced at several regional and national law firms after moving to Washington, earlier this year he and two colleagues formed their own firm, Carroll Biddle & Bilanko. This move, along with his partnership in a heated glove company, Chaval Outdoor, showcased Troy's entrepreneurial spirit.

Troy possessed a strong sense of commitment to his family, friends and community. Over the years, he devoted a great deal of energy to coaching as an extension of his love of sports and knack at helping people define, set and achieve their goals.

While Troy enjoyed cycling, river rafting and other outdoor adventures, he may have been happiest at home with friends and family, where his quick wit, coupled with deep insight and critical listening, could shine. Troy was a relationship-builder, and he loved connecting his family with his many friends, from fraternity brothers to childhood friends to colleagues and his Bainbridge Island community.

After attending Odyssey, a multiage school program on Bainbridge Island from second through sixth grades, this fall Baden Biddle excitedly started seventh grade with his teammates and other friends at Woodward Middle School. Last month he tried out and made the seventh grade Woodward Middle School basketball team, as well as the Roots traveling basketball squad that was to be coached by Troy.

It was no surprise that early on Baden developed a love for sports, especially football, basketball and baseball. Undoubtedly, because of Troy's enthusiasm for all sports and natural ability, coupled with the Horn family's deep roots in sports, Baden started playing on teams through parks and recreation as soon as possible.

Baden's skills in any given sport may have taken several years to develop, but his sense of friendship, teamwork, respect and everything else that it takes to be a good teammate was present from the beginning. Baden's positive attitude made him the consummate teammate and friend.

Baden cannot only be defined by his love of sports, although he could rattle off the latest sports news and statistics at will. Baden also had a great ear for music, played guitar, and listened to everything from classic rock to rap. Like his father, Baden had an analytical mind, was incredibly observant, possessed a sharp wit and, although somewhat reserved, was quietly self-assured for his age.

And, like his mom, Baden seized every opportunity to create memories with friends, and never took himself too seriously. The sparkle in Baden's eyes, bright smile, gentle personality, and creative sense of humor will be deeply missed by his family, friends, teachers and community.

Troy Biddle and Baden Biddle are survived respectively by their: wife and mother, Amanda Horn, Bainbridge Island; daughter and sister, Devon Biddle, 10, Bainbridge Island; mother and grandmother, Judy Benson, Astoria; brother and uncle, Todd Biddle (Debbie), Portland; niece and cousin, Ashley Gram (Chris), Portland; father-in- law and grandfather, Dan Horn (Betsy), American Canyon, California; sister-in- law and aunt, Denise Horn, and nephew and cousin, Jared Horn; and niece and cousin, Greta Horn, Napa, California.

Other surviving family members include aunts and great-aunts Jan Benson of Portland and Joyce Benson of Astoria, uncle Jim Benson of Astoria, and cousins Alyssa San Juan (Jayson) of Everett, Washington; Beth Tubbs (Eric) of Seattle, Washington; and Erin Jackson (Casey) of Gearhart, Oregon.

Troy and Baden were preceded in death by father and grandfather, Ronald Biddle, and mother-in-law and grandmother, Helen Lautenschalger.

Troy and Baden's lives will be remembered on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2017, at 11 a.m. at the Bainbridge Island High School Commons; and on Monday, Dec. 11, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. at The Loft at the Red Building in Astoria, Oregon.

In lieu of flowers, remembrances may be made to the Troy and Baden Biddle Memorial Fund located at Wells Fargo branches.

Ocean Park teen sentenced for robbery of pizza delivery driver

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

An Ocean Park, Washington, teenager was sentenced Wednesday to more than 4½ years in prison after admitting to robbing a Sahara Pizza delivery driver in June.

Christopher Joe Reimers, 17, pleaded guilty to second-degree robbery after reaching a deal with the Clatsop County District Attorney's Office. He originally also faced charges of first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, second-degree theft and strangulation.

Reimers and Hart Holden Stone, 20, of Astoria, ordered a pizza to an Emerald Heights home where one of them used to reside. When the driver approached the door, Reimers placed him in a chokehold while Stone grabbed a cash bag and fled.

Astoria police arrested Stone shortly after, but Reimers escaped after toiling through blackberry bushes, Chief Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown said. Authorities located him a few days later.

Stone pleaded guilty to second-degree robbery last week and was also sentenced to 4½ years. He will serve the prison time concurrently with a separate case in which he admitted to burglarizing the Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro a few days before the pizza robbery.

During Reimers' sentencing, Circuit Court Judge Paula Brownhill chided him for not fully articulating what crimes led to his guilty plea after she had asked. He also denied having contact with Stone.

"You're 17 years old, you just pled guilty to a robbery and you have nothing to say?" Brownhill asked. "I'm not encouraged about your chances for success when you've started off on the wrong foot here."

Reimers' criminal history includes convictions for disorderly conduct, theft, menacing and assault. He has been lodged in a Cowlitz County, Washington, jail, where he has accrued several behavioral violations.

James Lee von Boeckmann, Reimers' court-appointed attorney, said he and a defense investigator recently had a heart-to-heart conversation. After the conversation, Reimers apologized individually to employees at the jail. Reimers also cited a troubled upbringing after Brownhill prodded him for a response.

"You need to understand you can change that. Just because you didn't have the best upbringing doesn't mean you have to be a criminal," Brownhill said. "You're getting special treatment because you're young and we all have hope that you can improve yourself and contribute to society."

Turtle found near Fort Stevens dies

The Daily Astorian

A juvenile green sea turtle found stranded Sunday morning near Fort Stevens State Park has died.

The 20- to 30-pound turtle was discovered by a ranger at the mouth of the Columbia River near the South Jetty.

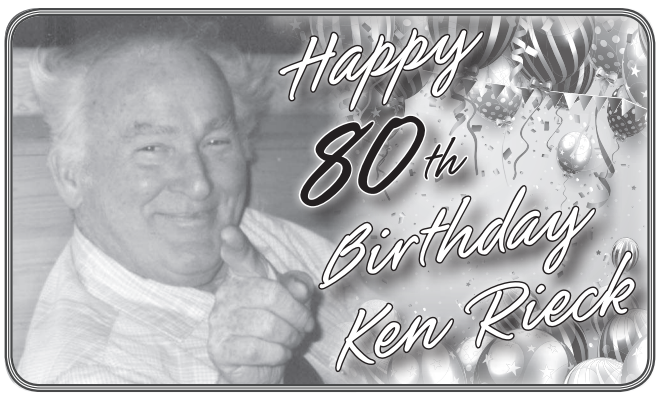
Green sea turtles typically inhabit tropical waters, so finding a young Pacific green turtle is "very rare," according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Field Advisor Laura Todd. The species is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

When the green sea turtle arrived for treatment, aquarium staff administered fluids, obtained blood samples and conducted a physical assessment.

This is the third turtle found recently on the coast.

The Oregon Coast Aquarium is in the midst of rehabbing an olive ridley sea turtle found in Ilwaco, Washington, in late November. Turkey, the female olive ridley found on Washington's Benson Beach that arrived at the Oregon State Aquarium on Thanksgiving, is still undergoing treatment.

Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium

A turtle that washed ashore near Fort Stevens has died.

Sea turtles are not found on Oregon or Washington state beaches unless stranded, Sally Compton, the public relations coordinator with the aquarium, said. Cold water temperatures, changing current and harsh storms wash the hypothermic turtles ashore.