

OPINION

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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 — 2008

Power was the key, but John Benthin had to wrestle smart. Knappa junior John Benthin simply overpowered the rest of the field to win the heavyweight title at the OSSA Class 2A state wrestling tournament Friday and Saturday at Portland's Memorial Coliseum.

Benthin completed his perfect run through the bracket with a 15-1 majority win over Crane senior Carl Neumann in Saturday's championship bout.

Though the December storm brought the Klotchy Creek Giant to its knees, the ancient Sitka spruce will remain an Oregon Heritage Tree until further notice.

The Oregon Heritage Tree Committee met last month and decided to keep the giant spruce south-east of Seaside on the state's list of heritage trees, even though it's just a snag now and most of the tree is lying on the forest floor.

"Until they determine the tree is just completely dead, they're going to keep it on the list," said Clatsop County Parks Director Steve Meshke. "It was the tree that started the program up, so they felt it could hold its title a little longer."

Two cannons were found over the Presidents Day weekend on the beach at Arch Cape.

The first cannon was spotted by Mike Petrone of Tualatin and his daughter, Miranda, while they were walking on the beach Saturday.

Petrone said he and his daughter first thought the cannon was an old stump.

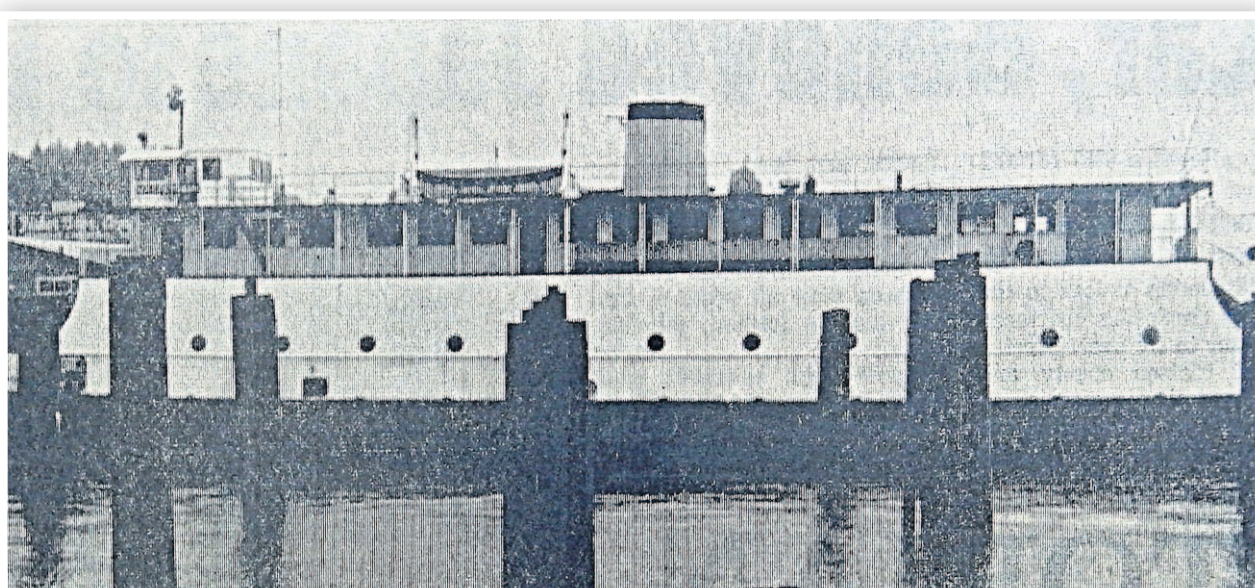
"I go, 'Gee, that's a funny looking stump.' Miranda said, 'I don't think it's wood. Dad, it's rusting.'"

So the pair did a bit of digging and soon the rough form of a cannon took shape. Petrone called the Cannon Beach Historical Society.

The second cannon was found Monday by Sharisse Repp of Tualatin, whose family spent the weekend at the coast with the Petrones. She said that after the first discovery, they all went back to the beach Monday to look for more pieces of the first cannon.

She wandered into the water, admiring what looked like an ancient forest bed, when she stumbled upon another hunk of metal.

"I started screaming I found the second cannon," Repp said.



The M.R. Chessman is to go to Vietnam for use by the Army as a ferry.

50 years ago — 1968

There were 13 ships left in the U.S. Maritime Administration's Astoria reserve fleet base Tuesday and four of them have already been sold to Zidell Explorations Inc. for scrapping.

The City Council retained Paul See, Clatsop college geologist, Monday evening to investigate the creeping slide which drops the level of Niagara Avenue near 15th several times each winter.

See said he recommended that a surface investigation be made of a five to six block area around the slide to obtain all information about sub-surface conditions it will provide.

The federal government apparently is about to make up its mind what to do with the ferry M.R. Chessman.

Astoria Marine construction company received word Tuesday afternoon that the Army is taking over the vessel for use as a ferry in Vietnam and that AMCCO can expect to go to work soon on its contract to repair the vessel and rig it for tow across the Pacific.

75 years ago — 1943

Twenty-two producers of fresh milk for Astoria homes Sunday voted 15 to 7 to continue producing milk for consumers in this city, but bitterly reaffirmed their determination to obtain from OPA a higher price for their work or else ship their milk to the creameries.

SEASIDE — The meat shortage is not without its humorous side. Will Haley, veteran meat dealer in this city, ran out of meat with the heavy Saturday business and today customers read the following sign on his door:

"We close Monday. This is a perfect wash day. Warm up the leftovers."

First Astoria girl to enlist in the ranks of the WAVES, women's service of the U.S. Navy, is Ruth Helen Marie Rabell, daughter of John F. Rabell, 1681 Harrison Avenue. Ensign Ellamae Naylor, first to go from here, is now stationed in San Francisco, having completed officer's training last month.

Second big rationing headache for Astoria and Clatsop County in as many weeks was scheduled to begin here Monday as D.J. Lewis, rationing administrator, and A.C. Hampton, city school superintendent, announced plans for the Ration Book 2 sign-up, for canned goods and coffee. Rationing will start March 1.

Canned meat and fish stocks, the latest objective of hoarders, were "frozen" on grocery-store shelves today.

All sales were ordered suspended without warning at 12:01 a.m., until rationing of meat goes into effect, probably about March 28, or for a maximum of 60 days.

The emergency crack-down on "panic-buying" was ordered by the office of price administration at the request of Food Administrator Claude R. Wickard. Officials said sales of canned meat and fish had skyrocketed in the past few weeks until there was danger that none of those items would be left by the time meat rationing begins.

Civilian supplies of canned meat and fish are very small and OPA officials said the "freeze" was designed to prevent hoarders from getting more than their share. Under rationing all persons will have an equal opportunity to share in the limited supply.

Relatively small amounts of canned meat and fish will be available for civilians even under rationing. Military and lend-lease orders will take 75 percent of the canned meat, 80 percent of the canned sardines and mackerel, and 60 percent of the canned salmon in 1943.

GUEST COLUMN

We need a treatment center, not a new jail

I attended the presentation of a new proposal for a new county jail at the Oregon Youth Authority site. The promotion has already started in the local news. This concept has been done several times before. This proposal advocates for hard prison construction (pods) at the very time when the state and the nation are trying to get out of the prison system.

Incarceration is very expensive. It is only punitive, and it rarely works. Inmates with mental disabilities, especially mental illness, and addiction comprise the vast bulk of the prison population. If the state can't make it work, why would it work for the county?

A 2004 study by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) of our county jail suggests

too many are put in jail. I think that study is still valid. It reveals many issues.

I propose that we take the Oregon Youth Authority property and use it as what might be described as a low-security, lockdown, county treatment and detention center. This would be a coming together of the sheriff's office, the parole and probation office, county physical health and proposed county mental health office(s), county addiction services, and a proposed social work office.

The purpose of this center would be to briefly hold, detoxify, stabilize, and assess inmates, create plans, and deliver them to the next level of treatment. That next level may be a return to the community under a probation officer's supervision, a foster home, community behavioral health treatment, addiction residential, state hospital, or before the court.

We need one dossier — a holistic folder of files, or portfolio — of arrest record, legal record, parole and probation, addiction, mental health, physical health files, and a family/community file. Over time, this dossier will give both a current status and a reliable forecast for the inmate.

Inmates should pass through this center quickly, usually not longer than about 10 days. This would maintain the inmate's in-community support system of income, rents, and possessions. In 10 days we have a "clean" addict, a stabilized (or not) mental



The sleeping quarters in one of the living units of the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility.

patient, a physically stabilized patient, a person introduced or reconnected to their probation office, and a new plan for release. By restriction to 10 days, a very large number can be processed, and still keep their community support system intact.

There is this need for a continuous community filter for an offender population that is approximately 1,200; the exact number needs to be determined. Those of highest risk go to advanced stage of treatment, which likely does destroy what supports they have. There is also need for assessment, and a plan for those returning from incarceration, or any program resulting in community supports being destroyed.

Currently, we ask that people with poor capabilities, unassisted, develop great resources, organization and a realistic plan. This course of action frequently fails, with costs borne by the community.

There is need for perhaps eight to 12 observation cells in an area of higher med-

ical security. This is where those of altered consciousness go. Extreme intoxication, to full psychosis, to suicide watch, and all who would harm themselves or others, go here until a determination is made. Should the inmate become sober, then there is quick return to main area for addiction service. If recovery is not made, then this is a holding area for transport to medical care.

If an incident occurs in main treatment area(s), then this is where the inmate is taken, for observation. These cells have rubber surfaces, rounded edges, minimal comforts, a large glass door, and are designed for power cleaning. They can be arranged in semi-circle or pod styles — continuous observation is the need. They are cheaper to construct and operationally cost about the same as standard high-security jail cells, but without need for the redundant security.

What other benefits to this center? Currently, court orders to seek treatment and supervision are wrapped in release orders,

and are too easily discarded. Here, treatment and first contact are applied. A plan is made. Probation violations are reduced.

Those of questionable mental stability, at risk for failure to appear in court, can be released by the court with proviso that they surrender to the center, or can be picked up a day or two in advance of their next court date. Failure to appear is a major cause of jail overcrowding. Using information in the dossier, the subject can be quickly found and detained.

For greater control of some in the community, the center could serve as a day release site. For times of the harshest weather, more vulnerable populations can be taken to safety and observation without need for a serious charge. There are many more opportunities for community service sentences as the support facilities for a treatment center — such as laundry, kitchen, and janitorial — also support the jail.

The professional staffing requirements are approximately the same for a high- or low-security facility. Will there still be a need for a high-security jail? There will always be a need. There will always be a need to separate inmates (Tillamook). High-security jail should be for high-security inmates bound for state incarceration. They would be inappropriate inmates for a treatment and detention center.

The current jail would meet our needs for high security if the crowding were removed. The advantages of a treatment and detention center are numerous over those of a new county jail. We don't know how many people we have who need treatment, nor do we know how many providers there are, nor what restrictions they may have. The power of family to assist has never been utilized. The dossier is the missing information.

This site is already a detention center; it may cost very little to remodel and would be operational much sooner. Even with repeat offenders, such a center would provide in-community control of many, many times more offenders than the need today. It would have multi-purpose uses, as opposed to the singular punitive use. It is a positive step forward in community-based control.

Richard Elfering is president of the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.