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Founded in 1873

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PUBLISHER’S NOTEBOOK

Working together as responsible stewards

I tell my friends that one of the best things about living in Astoria is the great seafood. What makes it great is not just what’s for dinner. Our character is provided by ports and piers. We all benefit from the generations of Astorians who came before us to make their livelihood from the land and water — those are the jobs that built our community.

Coming from generations of miners and ranchers and marrying into a family of loggers, I share the sense of history and pride that comes with working in natural resources. Nowhere will you find a stronger shared sense of stewardship of the earth’s gifts than from the people who make their living from them.



KARI BORGEN

So when I attended the Clatsop Commercial Fisheries tour recently, it was with great curiosity about these people who make their living from the sea. There’s a sense of romance, adventure and danger in fishing lore that belies the fact that it’s just damn hard work.

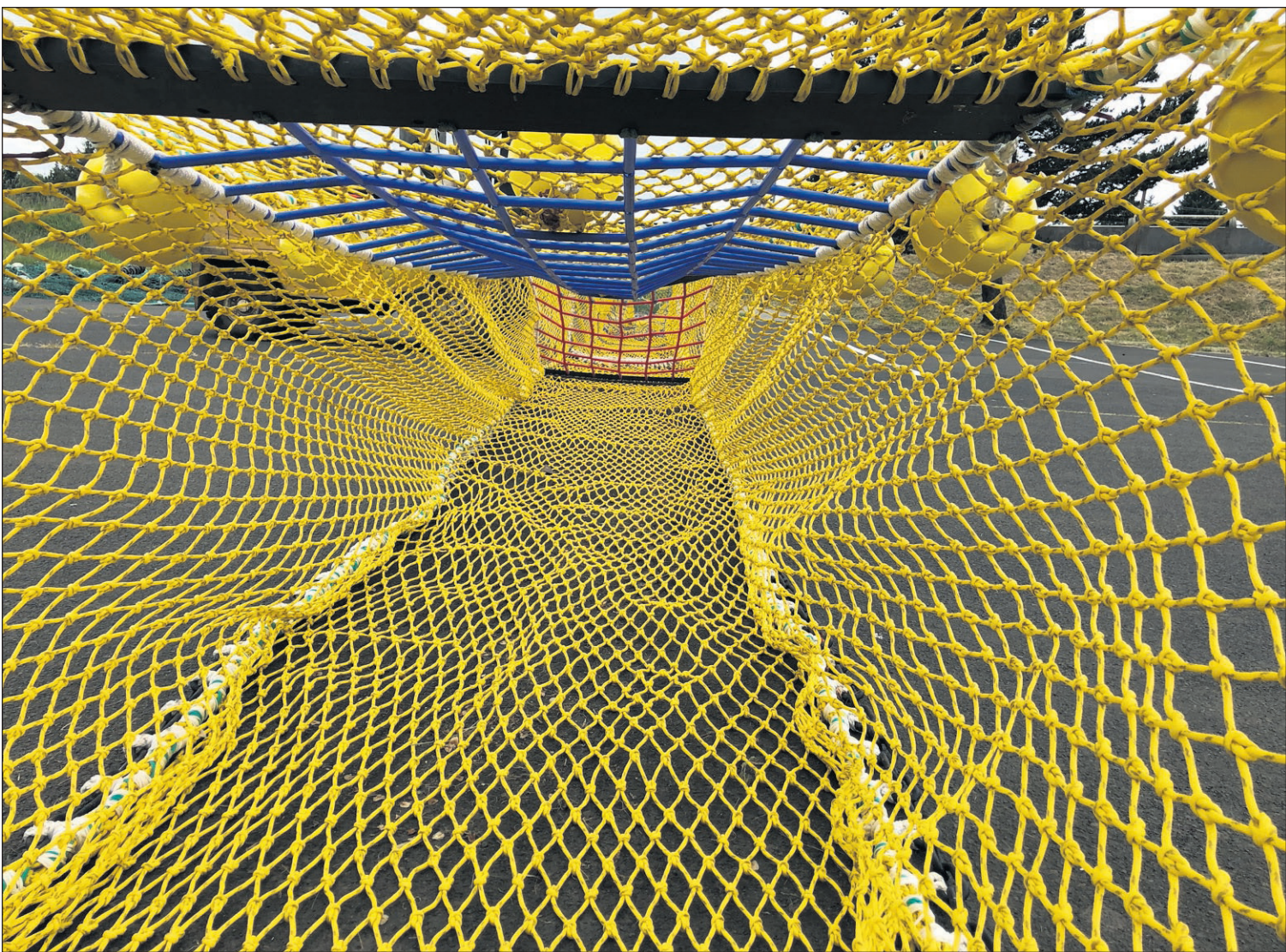
And getting harder. The regulatory challenges facing natural resource-based industries today have come about because of overharvesting in past generations, a time when the sea’s bounty seemed infinite. Current practices use historic, scientific, climactic and hands-on observation to understand each fishery.

The scientists, fishermen and processors represented at the fisheries tour, organized by OSU Extension, are working together to be responsible stewards of our oceans, in hopes that good practices can both create sustainability and offset the need for costly increased regulation.

Limits for each species

Amanda Gladics, assistant professor of the OSU Coastal Fisheries Extension in Clatsop County and tour organizer, explained the groundfishing challenges to me this way: “In 2011, the fleet moved to a system called ‘Catch Shares’ or Individual Fishing/Tradable Quotas (IFQs or ITQs). The idea here is that each fishermen has a limit for each species based on their historical catch records, and is accountable for everything they catch going forward. To provide oversight for that accountability, vessels have to carry a fisheries observer on every trip — a biologist who keeps track of everything the vessel catches.

“If a vessel catches more of a species than they have quota for, they have to lease that quota from another fisherman, sometimes at great cost. If they can’t find anyone to lease it from, they might have to just tie up and stop fishing for that season. That is sometimes called a ‘lightning strike’ within the industry



Kari Borgen/The Daily Astorian

A trawl net from the inside. If you were a fish, you’d be swimming into it right now.

— a single trawl tow that catches most of the entire fleet’s allocation of a rare species. It’s almost impossible for that vessel to lease enough quota to cover that kind of event.”

One of the ways to reduce the chances of such an event is through innovative trawl net design. To the uninitiated, (that would be me) a net looks like a net. It’s spooled into the sea, and when it’s reeled back in on the boat it’s full of fish.

But to Kevin Dunn, who makes his living trawl fishing and has a passion for science-based, artful net design, each net is crafted specifically for the species it is to catch, with trapdoors and escape hatches for the unwanted sea life likely to be swimming with them. The weights that drag the net bottom down, the floats that pull the top of the sock open, and the passageways of red and blue squares tied off with turquoise ropes look more like a tike’s climbing gym than a well-made piece of industrial equipment.

The squares are carefully crafted and aligned based on the catch that should pass through the net maze and the bycatch that shouldn’t. Four-inch or six-inch square? The nets are crafted, then tested to make sure that the size fits the fishery, releasing the bycatch to the sea.

Reducing bycatch

The goal is to reduce the catch of non-fished species. The idea of reducing bycatch is to minimize killing fish you don’t want to catch while keeping those that you do.

As Gladics said, “That’s why there is so much motivation for building more selective trawl nets. If (fishermen) can catch the fish they want, and avoid the rare fish, then they will be able to harvest closer to the amount they are now allowed to catch.”

The result? Fewer inadvertent kills, more fish in the ocean and better selective fisheries. The hope? Demonstrated best practices that

may offset expensive regulatory compliance.

What does it mean for you and me? If fishermen don’t have to tie up their boats mid-season, they continue to provide jobs, buy fuel and parts, and bring in fish to processors, who are also able to provide jobs and buy supplies. Those dollars continue to roll through our communities as employees buy groceries, clothes, housing and ... newspapers.

Since I’m still six months new to Astoria, I learn something new about this place and the people who live here every day. The fisheries tour was a great crash course in the issues that face one of the biggest segments of our economy. Oh, and did I mention that the Oregon Trawl Commission donated rockfish for lunch? Great seafood.

What do you think I need to learn about the North Coast? Let me know: kborgen@dailyastorian.com.

Kari Borgen is publisher of The Daily Astorian.

Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke
From the pages of Astoria’s daily newspapers

10 years ago this week — 2008

Senior class president Anthony Kustura stood before a standing-room-only crowd and addressed those gathered in the Astoria High School gym.

“It has been a long time coming,” he said, “and now our time is here.”

The Class of 2008 graduated Saturday afternoon, marking not only a bittersweet end of 139 students’ time in Astoria schools, but of a nearly decade-long series in The Daily Astorian tracking their progress.

The Daily Astorian undertook a major project in 1998 when it adopted the third-grade classes at John Jacob Astor Elementary, pledging to follow them through their high school graduation.

Few modern mariners can claim they’ve traveled the seas in a square-rigged tall ship.

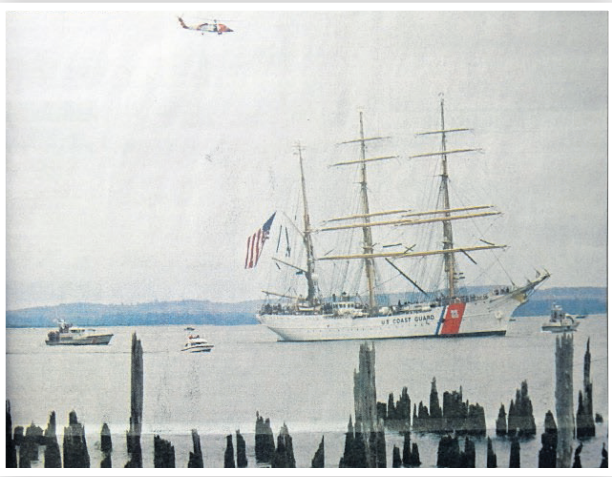
But Coast Guard Lt. J.G. Ben Lee sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to visit seven European countries during his time on the cutter Eagle — not counting a tour of the Caribbean — as have many others training for maritime service on the stately barque.

While travel is a side benefit, life aboard the Eagle “is also a lot of hard work,” said Lee, who now works in engineering on the Astoria-based Coast Guard cutter Steadfast.

Even with sails furled, running on engine power, the ship was tough to miss Thursday as a Columbia River bar pilot steered her up the channel toward the 17th Street Pier, where the Eagle docked for four days of free public tours.

50 years ago — 1968

Descended from a lowly chicken feeder, a 50-inch bundle



The Daily Astorian

The Coast Guard cutter Eagle is escorted up the Columbia River into Astoria in 2008.

of energy called the Lektro forklift is rolling out of the assembly room at Wilt Paulson’s factory at Clatsop airport.

The bright orange and blue lifts, operated by power from a self-contained battery unit, are designed to pick up a 1,500-pound load, raise it to a height of 10 feet and hustle it around the floor of a small factory.

“It’s designed for the small businessman who can’t afford to spend \$6,000 for a lift,” Paulson said.

The units are expected to sell in the \$3,000 range. Designed in the Lektro factory, the lift has been in production about two months. The basic power plant is patterned after one used by the firm in manufacture of a battery-operated chicken feeder. Lektro Inc. also makes a golf cart.

Paulson, president of the firm, recalled that the organization will be 21 years old Aug. 8 and for the past 21 years has specialized in battery-operated machines.

Port of Astoria commissioners agreed Tuesday night to a joint venture with Port of Portland to lease the former maritime administration reserve fleet base and convert it to some useful maritime purpose.

The maritime administration has given up the base, moving all the ships out to Suisun Bay and Olympia reserve fleet bases.

Full utilization of present fish hatchery facilities might triple future production of the silver salmon “farms.”

This fact was brought out Wednesday at a meeting of federal and state fishery officials with representatives of Astoria packing plants and the Columbia River Fishermen’s Protective Union.

75 years ago — 1943

One of the oldest dairy cooperatives in the west — the Skamokawa Farmers’ Creamery — has been absorbed by the Lower Columbia Dairy cooperative, which has completed negotiations for purchase and is awaiting WPB priorities to complete the deal, it was learned today.

The Skamokawa cooperative was organized in 1894 and at time of its purchase late last month had about 150 members. The company was manufacturing between 300,000 and 400,000 pounds of butter a year, with its byproducts from skimmed milk going largely to casein until recently.

McDannell Brown, chief enforcement attorney for the district office of price administration, said here in explanation of the current checking of cars at fishing streams and summer resorts, “No one has a moral right to do any pleasure driving at all.”

He added that the 90 miles of gasoline a month A, B, or C card holders are allowed for family driving is not for pleasure trips but for necessary errands. He said penalties for pleasure driving will be imposed by ration boards to the extent of revoking a gasoline ration entirely.

Two women employees at the Astoria airport really know now what it means to be taken for a ride. Better than the familiar ditty “I’m a specialist and gosh darn good one too” is the story being told today by the Lewis and Clark correspondent of this newspaper.

It all happened a few days ago when the two women were in a restroom at the airport construction project. They heard a caterpillar tractor stop outside and driver hop off. There was a rattle of chains and to the women’s amazement their restroom began to move.

The “cat” gained speed and the two women in their most unusual conveyance bounded merrily along for some distance to the new spot considered desirable for the location of the institution that made the WPA boys famous.

When the two women emerged, indignant and disheveled, from their traveling restroom, the “cat” driver hastily beat a strategic retreat, turning the situation over to his immediate superior, the foreman of the moving job.

“Boy, was his face red,” the women said in telling of the attempt of the foreman to explain and apologize to them.