



Lylah Huff watches fireworks on the Fourth of July.

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

## Astoria hears concerns about fireworks

### One resident calls for a ban

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
The Daily Astorian

Astoria city councilors briefly discussed a possible ban on fireworks Monday after Mayor Arline LaMear received a letter from a resident worried about how the celebratory explosives impact the city.

The writer asked for a ban

on the sale of fireworks in Astoria, LaMear told councilors. LaMear asked if there was anything the City Council could do to give the police and fire departments “a little more clout” in dealing with fireworks complaints.

But the majority of the council didn’t support moving ahead with any kind of discussion to institute a ban.

City Councilor Bruce Jones and Police Chief Geoff Spalding pointed out that legal fireworks aren’t the main problem. It’s the illegal fireworks

that people continue to buy and light off despite the restrictions in place. Police and fire personnel already have trouble enforcing the rules for these explosives, a problem many communities large and small share, Spalding said.

A ban would just be a way to make a statement, City Councilor Tom Brownson said.

“If we want to make a statement, I think we could have that discussion, but I don’t think we’re going to be able to effectively stop this as much as I agree to a certain extent.”

Though, he added, “I don’t want to ban sparklers.”

The city already has so many issues to prioritize, City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill said, but the letter writer is not the only one concerned about fireworks.

“Perhaps you bringing this up here will bring some other citizens out of the woodwork,” Nemlowill told LaMear, adding, “If there’s going to be any kind of movement here, and I think there’s some merit to it, we need to hear from the citizens if they want a change.”

## Washington researcher safe after wolf encounter

By **COURTNEY FLATT**  
Northwest Public Broadcasting

Thanks to quick thinking, a tree and a helicopter, a salmon researcher in Washington state was able to evade two wolves she couldn’t scare off.

Biologists who visited the spot Friday to investigate the incident attributed the rare wolf-human interaction to the presence of wolf pups nearby.

Authorities haven’t released the name of the student researcher involved. She could not be reached for comment. However, authorities have reconstructed what happened.

It started out as a normal morning of surveying streams in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Then the seasonal Forest Service employee started to notice wolf tracks and heard yipping and barking.

A little while later, two wolves from the Loup Loup pack appeared. The student yelled and tried to wave them away. She sprayed bear spray, but nothing worked.

That’s when she climbed 30 feet up a tree to escape. She climbed back down when she thought it was safe, only to encounter the wolves again. She called for

help on a satellite phone and was rescued by a Washington Department of Natural Resources helicopter.

The helicopter was able to scare the wolves away and fly the researcher to safety. It was an unusual situation for the pilots — typically they’re used in wildland firefighting and have been deployed all over the state for that purpose.

“To my knowledge this is the first time that we have rescued a biologist from a tree with wolves at the base,” said Hilary Franz, Washington’s commissioner of public lands.

Franz said the Department of Natural Resources, which she oversees, has helped respond to other rescues and accidents when pilots are able to.

Officials say the salmon researcher did everything right — and they’re not sure what went wrong.

Okanogan County Sheriff Frank Rogers says people need to be aware of their surroundings.

“I’ve tried to tell people, it’s not like the movies. The wolves aren’t running around in packs hunting humans.

But if you see a pack, don’t antagonize it. If it’s feeding, for God’s sake, stay away from it. If you run upon a den, stay away from it,” Rogers said.

## New documentary hopes to unravel Cooper mystery

### Another theory into the famous skyjacking

By **TOM BANSE**  
Northwest News Network

The legend and theorizing about Northwest skyjacker D.B. Cooper just won’t die.

A new documentary about the unsolved 1971 hijacking introduces a new twist to the tale: It suggests we might have been looking for D.B. Cooper and his loot in the wrong place for all these years.

The makers of the four-part video literally rolled out a red carpet for the sold-out premiere of “D.B. Cooper: The Real Story.” It happened at a community center in Cle Elum, Washington, on Saturday.

The town in the eastern foothills of the Cascades was chosen deliberately because Cle Elum is the closest town to where former Army paratrooper Walter Recca said he landed after he jumped out of a hijacked Boeing 727 with a \$200,000 ransom tied to his chest.

Decades later, Recca confessed to a close friend and to a niece that he committed the hijacking under the pseudonym Cooper and made a clean getaway. He allowed himself to be recorded by the friend, Carl Laurin, with the understanding that the secret not be revealed until after Recca’s death, which came in 2014.

The written and recorded confessions are at the heart of the new documentary and a book released in May that covers the same ground, both from Michigan-based publisher Principia Media.

If you remember your Cooper lore, you’ll know the jump zone has always been assumed to be over southwest Washington, close to Portland. The airline, the FBI and amateur sleuths have analyzed the flight path many times. No one else has placed the jump over central Washington.



Principia Media

Walter Recca during a visit home in 1984.

Laurin asserts the FBI “bungled” this high profile case or purposely misdirected searchers away from the correct jump zone.

“Do I believe that there was a cover-up here?” Laurin asked rhetorically in an interview. “Let me put it this way, it’s the only honest answer I can come up with. D.B. Cooper jumped over Cle Elum.”

On the afternoon of Nov. 24, 1971, Cooper boarded a Northwest Orient Airlines plane in Portland with a one-way ticket to Seattle. He passed a note to a stewardess indicating he had a bomb in his briefcase. He subsequently negotiated to exchange the passengers in Seattle for \$200,000 in ransom and four parachutes. He also got the authorities to refuel the plane and said he wanted to be flown to Mexico.

Shortly after takeoff from Seattle, the remaining flight crew — which had retreated to the cockpit — noticed a warning light indicating deployment of the jet’s aft stairs. Cooper is believed to have jumped from the stairs a few minutes later at an altitude of 10,000 feet into a frigid Thanksgiving Eve storm. He was never seen again. The plane landed safely in Reno, Nevada, for a planned refueling stop a few hours later without Cooper on board.

The FBI effectively closed the Cooper case in 2016. The bureau said it won’t reopen the cold case unless someone comes up with relevant physical evidence such as the parachutes the hijacker used or ran-

son money.

The makers of the new documentary found neither of these things. There are some other discrepancies in their story, including Recca’s age at the time of the hijacking, 38 years old, which is on the young side of the estimates from passengers and airline employees interviewed by the FBI at the time. They figured the skyjacker was in his mid-40s.

“Although the FBI appreciates the immense number of tips provided by members of the public, none to date have resulted in a definitive identification of the hijacker. The tips have conveyed plausible theories, descriptive information about individuals potentially matching the hijacker, and anecdotes — to include accounts of sudden, unexplained wealth,” FBI-Seattle Division spokesperson Jillian Voigt wrote in an email Monday. “In order to solve a case, the FBI must prove culpability beyond a reasonable doubt, and, unfortunately, none of the well-meaning tips or applications of new investigative



AP Photo

This sketch shows the skyjacker known as D.B. Cooper.

technology have yielded the necessary proof.”

Principia Media’s investigators faced a challenge in reconciling the getaway story they accepted with one of the undisputed facts of the Cooper case, namely, how did a cache of the ransom money get buried in a sandbank along the Columbia River north of Portland. In 1980, a boy digging a campfire pit at Tena Bar uncovered three bundles of decomposing \$20 bills, whose serial numbers traced back to the Cooper ransom money.

Laurin and the documentary makers posit that an appreciative Recca gave his getaway driver a bundle of bills and that the accomplice later buried the loot at Tena Bar to dispose of evidence that connected the driver to the hijacking.

Recca is the latest in a line of at least a dozen previous suspects publicly accused by friends and relatives or self-confessed to be Cooper.

The new documentary presents other details that make Recca a plausible suspect. He had nighttime parachuting experience, survival training, a



AP Photo

This sketch shows the skyjacker known as D.B. Cooper.

criminal background (he previously committed armed robbery) and a motive (tired of being poor).

Self-appointed investigator Laurin managed to locate an eyewitness who, with some prompting, corroborated Recca’s getaway. That eyewitness is a Cle Elum musician and former logging company truck driver. Jeff Osiadacz now believes he unwittingly helped Cooper summon a getaway driver to the roadside café where they were the only customers on Thanksgiving Eve 1971.

“He come in and the first thing he said is, ‘Hey kid, where am I?’” Osiadacz said. “I said, ‘You’re about 4 miles east of Cle Elum.’ And he says, ‘If I make a phone call, can you give a friend directions how to pick me up?’ I says, ‘Sure, no problem.’”

At the time, the musician didn’t suspect the soaking wet,

odd, limping man was anything more than “a French fry short of a happy meal.”

“Never saw him again, never know nothing,” Osiadacz said. “The next day, they’re advertising this guy that jumped out an airplane, all this on the news media. They’re showing these composite sketches and everything. Didn’t look nothing like the man I was sitting with.”

Recca told Laurin he removed and bundled up his parachute after he landed outside Cle Elum and covered it up with branches. There are no accounts of anyone finding a parachute in that area, which might have been newsworthy at the time given the intense coverage of the hijacking.

Recca said he limped for about a half an hour in the direction of the closest lights he saw during his descent, which Laurin deduced to be the Teanaway Junction Café. At the café, Recca recalled meeting a musician in a cowboy outfit, now believed to be Osiadacz. The cafe no longer exists.

After spending two-and-a-half years investigating the Cooper case and making his documentary, filmmaker Dirk Wierenga said he is confident they fingered the right guy.

“I’m a 100 percent (confident),” Wierenga said in an interview Saturday. “I gotta tell you every other story that is out there is voodoo. They’re all voodoo.”

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