

POINT of view

THE DAILY ASTORIAN // QUESTION OF THE WEEK



"I definitely love decorating for Halloween, and decorating pumpkins with my kids. It's my favorite holiday."

Katy Paz, Astoria



"Carving pumpkins. Baking cookies and pumpkin seeds. Eating."

Alexis Wallace, Astoria



"Football. Hiking. We go out to Ecola Park. I love the fall."

Marie Meiffren, Astoria

Suspect raised pilot's suspicions a year before Sea-Tac plane heist

By LEWIS KAMB
Seattle Times

A commercial airline pilot says he encountered Richard Russell — the Horizon Air baggage handler who stole a passenger plane from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and took it for a wild 75-minute flight before crashing last month — at the helm of an unoccupied aircraft a year earlier, according to interviews and emergency-dispatch audio recordings obtained by The Seattle Times.

Joel Monteith, a pilot for SkyWest Airlines, told an emergency dispatcher in August that after he saw Russell and a second man "pointing and flipping switches" inside the empty SkyWest jet at the airport last year, "I went over and confronted them, and I said, 'Hey, what are you guys doing in here?'"

The men told Monteith they were training to use the plane's auxiliary-power unit so they'd know how to tow it as part of their jobs, he said, "but they kind of ... started to get up and then leave the airplane when I confronted them. So, that was kind of suspicious."

Monteith's conversation with the dispatcher about his previous encounters with Russell is among dozens of audio recordings of emergency-dispatch communications recently obtained by The Times under a state Public Records Act request

that provide more insight into the Horizon incident from the time it was unfolding and during its immediate aftermath.

Monteith also reported to the dispatcher that he recalled Russell had been "inside my cockpit" of an Embraer 175 jet airliner on at least one other occasion, "asking questions (and) wanting to do my flows, which is the preflight preparation I do for takeoff."

"I don't think the thing with this guy is like a plot that this dude just came up with like overnight," Monteith added. "I think that maybe this guy had been thinking about doing this for a long time and then maybe the Q400 that he took was just an airplane of opportunity."

During an interview Tuesday, Monteith, a 55-year-old Tacoma resident with 30 years of piloting experience, confirmed making the report, but he said no investigator has since followed up with him.

"I'm actually kind of surprised about it," Monteith said. "I haven't heard back from Pierce County, and the FBI hasn't contacted me, either."

An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment about the pilot's report, citing in an email Tuesday an "ongoing investigation." A spokeswoman for Alaska Airlines and Horizon Air did not respond to The Times' request for comment.

Monteith reported the

encounters to an emergency dispatcher in Pierce County the day after Russell's solo flight in the Air Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 that he'd commandeered from an airport cargo area, taxied onto a runway and lifted off on the evening of Aug. 10.

Russell, a married 29-year-old Alaska transplant who lived in Sumner, pulled off several aerobatic stunts during the unauthorized flight before the plane crashed into the woods on sparsely populated Ketron Island in South Puget Sound.

During a rambling, recorded conversation with ground control, Russell described himself as a "man in crisis," but also calmly chatted about such observations as Mount Rainier's beauty and how to find an orca that for days had garnered national attention while carrying its dead calf in Puget Sound.

The unauthorized flight shut down Sea-Tac Airport traffic, prompted two F-15 fighter jets in Portland to break the sound barrier while scrambling to the scene and drew dozens of awe-struck witnesses to call 911.

It also left pilots and other aviation experts speculating as to how Russell, a low-paid ground-services employee with no apparent pilot experience, knew how to fly the 76-seat passenger turboprop plane and pull off the jaw-dropping aerial maneuvers.

OBITUARIES

Donald Robert Sparks

Astoria

Sept. 10, 1954 — Sept. 10, 2018



Donald Robert Sparks was the son of Robert Royal and Corinne Sparks, and Joseph Henry and Donna Mae Parnell. Donny was born and raised in Astoria, and attended Astoria High School with the Class of 1973.

Before the end of high school, Donny enlisted in the Army. Donny then married Ruth Nan Hutson on Dec. 23, 1989. They have raised their three children, Samuel Hutson, Sharie Blackburn and Alex Sparks in Astoria.

Donny was a husband, father, brother, uncle and grandfather. He loved playing Santa at Christmas-time for all his kids, nieces, nephews and any other family or friends who needed him. He'd even visited the jail in his Santa suit on his motorcycle. Donny loved helping other people. Donny was also known for being the cool uncle, Tonka trucks, being one of the luckiest guys ever, always coming to functions last and leaving first.

Donny made an impression on everyone he met. He loved casinos, road trips, and bingo, and two of his favorite pastimes are his infa-

mous joke-telling, and him riding his moped around town, enjoying life.

All who knew Donny knew he had a heart bigger than himself.

Donny is also survived by his rock, his wife, Ruth Nan Sparks; children, Samuel Hutson, Sharie Blackburn and Alex Sparks and his wife, Caitlin; brother, Gordon Sparks; sisters, Melody Knight and her husband, Arthur, and Jill Harms and her husband, Dan; five grandchildren, Kylie, Vanessa, Teresa, Claire and Jade; numerous nieces and nephews; and his sweet dog, Piper. Family was everything to Donny.

Donny was preceded in death by his father, Robert Royal Sparks; second father, Joseph Henry Parnell; mother, Donna Mae Parnell; and brother, Rodney Allen Sparks.

"I guess I'm done pissing people off." — Donny Sparks

Please join us for a celebration of Donny's life at the American Legion in Astoria, Oregon, on Saturday, Sept. 15, at 1 p.m.



Donald Sparks

Laurine Ann Choate

Olympia, Washington

Sept. 28, 1954 — Sept. 5, 2018

Laurine Ann Choate died on Sept. 5, 2018, when she lost her footing and fell while hiking on the Pacific Crest Trail near Snoqualmie Pass. She was with her best friend of 45 years, Karen, doing what she loved most.

Laurie was born Sept. 28, 1954, to Leeland and Virginia Wiegard of Ocean Park, Washington. She grew up with her three brothers, Fritz, David and Bill, near their family oyster farm in Oysterville.

Growing up, Laurie loved riding her horses Denny and Buck, and spent hours in the barn taking care of them, or riding them on the beach just down the street. Laurie was a runner, and held her high school track records at Ilwaco High School, and completed all 12 legs of the Hood to Coast Relay.

She was a lifelong traveler, and loved family trips to Hawaii and British Columbia, and eventually lived in Australia for four years after college, and completed several multiday backpacking trips in Europe.

Laurie was an active member and volunteer leader of the Olympia Mountaineers. In a state-

ment released from the Mountaineers: "She was passionate about the natural world, joining the Naturalist Committee and leading trips in partnerships with expert ornithologists to better understand the local bird population.

"She was also an active member of the naturalist program and a graduate from Basic Navigation, Alpine Scrambling, Wilderness Skills, Mountaineering Oriented First Aid, and Basic Nordic Skiing. She participated in, or led, more than 50 trips with the Mountaineers in the last two years alone. She was a close friend and respected leader."

Laurie was a fierce lover of the outdoors, a loyal friend, a champion of her nursing students, and an incredible mother. There will be a service held at First Lutheran Church in Astoria on Thursday, Sept. 13, at 1 p.m., and a celebration of life held at Mount Rainier National Park on Sunday, Oct. 7.

Laurie is preceded in death by her mother, father and brother; Virginia, Leeland and William Wiegard. She is survived by her children, John and Kathryn Choates, and brothers, Fritz and David Wiegard.



Laurine Choate

ON THE RECORD

Assault

• At 9:43 p.m. Tuesday, Adam Lee Taylor, 22, of Warrenton, was arrested by Warrenton police on the 470 block of North Main Avenue and charged with fourth-degree assault, harassment and first-degree criminal trespass. Taylor allegedly hit a woman in the stomach during a domestic dispute. He had a no-contact order with the woman.

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TONIGHT	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
52	64 / 51	64 / 51	62 / 49	65 / 47
Partly cloudy with a passing shower	Periods of sun with a couple of showers	A few a.m. showers, then rain and drizzle	Rain at times	Mostly cloudy with rain possible

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ALMANAC

Astoria through Tuesday.

Temperatures
High/low 66°/54°
Normal high/low 69°/50°
Record high 88° in 2009
Record low 37° in 1988

Precipitation
Tuesday 0.18"
Month to date 0.50"
Normal month to date 0.66"
Year to date 36.78"
Normal year to date 38.76"

SUN AND MOON

Sunset tonight 7:33 p.m.
Sunrise Thursday 6:51 a.m.
Moonrise today 10:12 a.m.
Moonset today 9:31 p.m.

REGIONAL WEATHER

Shown is tomorrow's weather. Temperatures are tonight's lows and tomorrow's highs.

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Arcturus, a brilliant yellow-orange star, descends in the western sky this evening.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

REGIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Thu	W	City	Today	Thu	W
Baker City	68 39	pc	65 32	pc	Olympia	65 48	c
Bend	64 37	pc	65 35	pc	Pendleton	71 48	pc
Brookings	61 48	pc	60 46	pc	Portland	66 53	sh
Eugene	68 48	sh	69 49	pc	Roseburg	70 47	sh
Ilwaco	62 53	sh	62 53	sh	Salem	67 49	sh
Klamath Falls	65 33	pc	65 30	pc	Seaside	64 53	sh
Medford	72 47	pc	73 45	s	Spokane	66 46	pc
Newberg	66 48	sh	68 49	pc	Springfield	68 49	sh
Newport	60 50	sh	60 49	pc	Vancouver	65 51	c
North Bend	63 51	sh	64 50	pc	Yakima	71 42	pc

TOMORROW'S NATIONAL WEATHER

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.

DEATH

Sept. 10, 2018

JACOB, Robert H. "Jake," 69, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Saturday, Sept. 15

VAUGHN, Betty Eleanor — Memorial at 2 p.m., Bethany Free Lutheran Church, 451 34th St.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

<p>WEDNESDAY Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 6 p.m., Judge Guy Boyington Building, 857 Commercial St. Astoria School Board, 6:15 p.m., study session, 7:30 p.m., regular meeting, Capt. Robert Gray School third-floor board-</p>	<p>room, 785 Alameda Ave. Wickiup Water District Board, 6:30 p.m., 92648 Svensen Market Road, Svensen. Warrenton-Hammond School Board, 7 p.m., Warrenton High School library, 1700 S. Main Ave.</p>	<p>THURSDAY Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave. Cannon Beach Academy, 5:30 p.m., 3781 S. Hemlock. Astoria Urban Core Town Hall, 6:30 p.m., Room 219, Columbia Hall, Clatsop Community College</p>
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LOTTERIES

<p>OREGON Tuesday's Pick 4: 1 p.m.: 8-1-8-5 4 p.m.: 0-6-7-4 7 p.m.: 5-1-6-3 10 p.m.: 7-7-8-2 Tuesday's Lucky Lines: 1-6-12-</p>	<p>14-17-23-27-31 Estimated jackpot: \$23,000 Tuesday's Mega Millions: 15-30-51-62-67, Mega Ball: 19 Estimated jackpot: \$227 million</p>	<p>WASHINGTON Tuesday's Daily Game: 3-9-5 Tuesday's Keno: 02-05-06-16-17-21-25-27-28-32-40-41-43-44-49-50-51-57-73-76 Tuesday's Match 4: 06-08-20-24</p>
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