

Late nursing instructor remembered for passion

Choate died while hiking

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Family, friends and colleagues of Laurie Choate filled the First Lutheran Church in Astoria last week to memorialize a woman they described as a dedicated educator who gave it her all, whether instructing nurses or exploring the mountains in search of wildflowers.

The Long Beach Peninsula native died earlier this month while hiking in the central Washington Cascades. She is survived by her daughter, Katie, an education policy analyst in Seattle; her son, John, a local forester with the state; and brothers, David and Fritz Wiegardt, of Ocean Park, Washington.

"I just think that she always loved empowering people, especially women, to get into



Katie Choate

In addition to her work in the nursing field, Laurie Choate was an outdoor enthusiast.

professions they could get passionate about, and teaching was always easy for her," Katie Choate said. "I would say the relationships were the most important piece."

Laurie Choate spent 30 years with Clatsop Community College teaching nursing and science, and later running the nursing and allied

health department from 2006 to 2014. She served on the Astoria School Board from 2002 to 2014. Four years ago, she retired locally and moved to Olympia, Washington, to help the nursing program at South Puget Sound Community College regain national accreditation.

Allison Sansom, who took

over from Choate as director of nursing and allied health four years ago, remembers being an administrator at an assisted living facility when Choate encouraged her to attend graduate school and apply to run the college's nursing program.

"I believe I inherited about the best-run nursing program in the state of Oregon," Sansom said. "It's enormous shoes to fill, because she was so good at everything she did."

Throughout the church on Thursday were remembrances of Choate's various passions in life — photos of the wildflowers and landscapes she photographed while hiking; pendants and other memorabilia from marathons, the Hood to Coast Relay and her time running track at the University of Washington; certificates from her long hours spent volunteering with the National Park Service and the Olympia Mountaineers; and an award

for her 12 years of service on the Astoria School Board.

Grace Laman, a nutrition instructor at the college and an Astoria School Board member, said it was Choate — during a Hood to Coast Relay — who encouraged her to get involved with the school district and take up the health and wellness baton.

"She was sort of a champion for health and wellness in the school district," Laman said.

Below one table with Choate's portrait was a soap box, presented to her by students when she retired from the college as a nod to her passion on various health-related issues. Karla Glenn, who graduated from the college's nursing program in 2011, described Choate as the pre-eminent role model, both tough and highly supportive of her students.

"I wouldn't be here as a nurse today if it wasn't for Laurie," Glenn said. "She

was very interested in your success."

After Choate's memorial, people filled out prayer strips with their name and a word that best described her. Katie Choate plans to embroider the strips and string them together as another memorial to her mother.

Asked about her fondest memories of her mother, Katie Choate thought again of the outdoors.

"We did two huge hikes together, one around the Wonderland Trail that goes around Mount Rainier, and another called the Tour du Mont Blanc," she said. "They're my two fondest memories, and honestly the two favorite trips I've taken."

Many of the outdoor enthusiasts Choate spent time with in the mountains were not able to make the memorial in Astoria, she said. They will meet early next month for a celebration of life on Mount Rainier.

Ailing killer whale declared dead

By PHUONG LE and GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Efforts to find a sick young orca from a critically endangered population of killer whales in the Pacific Northwest came up empty, and a scientist who tracks the animals declared her dead.

The grim news means scientists believe just 74 whales remain in a group that has failed to reproduce successfully in the past three years. The orcas have struggled with pollution, boat noise and, most severely, a dearth of their preferred prey, Chinook salmon, because of dams, habitat loss and overfishing.

"We're watching a population marching toward extinction," said Ken Balcomb of the Center for Whale Research. "Unless we do something about salmon recovery, we're just not going to have these whales in the future."

The whales are in such bad shape that experts prepared last-ditch efforts to save the emaciated nearly 4-year-old known as J50. A sharpshooting veterinarian fired an antibiotic-filled dart into her, crews

'Unless we do something about salmon recovery, we're just not going to have these whales in the future.'

Ken Balcomb

of the Center for Whale Research

dropped live salmon in front of her to try to get her to eat, and scientists even mulled capturing her so they could diagnose and treat her.

J50 has not been seen since Sept. 10. As teams scrambled to find her last week, she failed to appear with her pod once again, despite favorable sighting conditions. Balcomb, who tracks the whales for the U.S. government, declared her dead late Thursday afternoon.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration called off the active search late Friday.

Crews in a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter, 10 vessels, whale watch crews and other resources on both sides of the border were involved in the search. Authorities also alerted a network of people who respond when marine mam-

mals wash ashore.

Whale experts feared the orca was dead earlier this month when J50 lagged behind her family and went missing. But she later turned up and was seen with her family.

The distinctive black-and-white orcas, known as southern resident killer whales, have struggled since they were listed as an endangered species in the U.S. and Canada well over a decade ago.

The orcas' numbers are now at their lowest in more than three decades.

Another whale in the same pod, known as J35, triggered

international sympathy this summer when she kept the body of her dead calf afloat in waters for more than two weeks.

The message, the Center for Whale Research said in a website post, is that extinction is looming "while the humans convene task forces and conference calls that result in nothing, or worse than nothing, diverting attention and resources from solving the underlying ecological problems."

Scientist began to be concerned about J50 in July. Teams dropped live salmon from a boat as J50 and her pod swam behind — a test to see whether fish could be used as a means of delivering medication.

Drone images taken earlier this month showed J50 much thinner than she was last year. Her mother, J16, has also declined in condition in the past month.

Astoria woman to represent Oregon fisheries

The Daily Astorian

An Astorian long involved in the West Coast's commercial fishing industry will now have a hand in managing those fisheries.

Christa Svensson has been sworn in as a member of the Pacific Fishery Management Council to represent Oregon. The 19-member council directs the fisheries arm of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on the management of federal West Coast fisheries.

Svensson is the fleet manager for Ilwaco Fish Co./Alber Seafoods. Her term on the council will expire in August 2021.

Svensson was a commercial fisherman for seven years while paying for

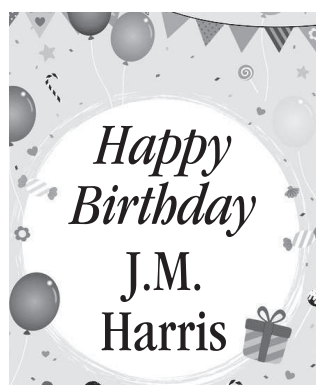


Christa Svensson

undergraduate and graduate school, fishing for salmon, halibut and sablefish in Alaska. More recently, she worked at Bornstein Seafoods for 12 years in international sales, sustainability and marketing. She has also worked for National Seafood Educations, where she researched recipe ideas, taught cooking classes nationally and sold seafood cookbooks.

She serves as the vice president of the American Fisherman's Research Foundation and is on the board of the REALOregon, Resource Education and Agricultural Leadership Program.

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