



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Developers have expressed an interest in focusing more on live music at the Astoria Armory.

NONPROFIT SEES NEW LIFE AT ASTORIA ARMORY

Potential for a modern concert venue

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Robert “Jake” Jacob had a vision in 2013 when the Columbia River Maritime Museum put its storage space at the Astoria Armory up for sale.

“Creating a ‘Friends of the Armory’ is my goal, so that we can preserve this amazing community asset for multiple uses and events — some of which would be economic drivers for us here,” the developer, who died this year, wrote in a letter to *The Daily Astorian* enticing the public to tour and take interest in the building.

After nearly five years of excising the Armory’s buried environmental demons with the support of financial lender Craft3, Friends of the Astoria Armory last week took possession of the building, beginning a new chapter of its renovation into a modern performance venue.

Craft3 provided the Friends a \$550,000 loan, \$338,000 of it to purchase the building. The rest will go into adding another emergency exit, which will increase the venue’s capacity from 750 to 1,500.

The Friends will install more Americans with Disabilities Act-accessi-



Mike Davies discusses plans for the Astoria Armory.

ble bathrooms, refurbish the large windows under the vaulted lamella roof and improve the building’s sound system and acoustics. The city of Astoria guaranteed \$90,000 of the loan to assist with window restoration.

“What we’ve been doing so far has been by hook and by crook, by grant and donation,” said Mike Davies, president of the Friends’ board.

Craft3, a nonprofit lender specializing in high-risk rural projects with a big potential community impact, purchased the building in 2014 from the museum to help the Friends form and focus on oper-

ating the venue. The hope was that the Friends would take over in about a year, said Craft3’s CEO, Adam Zimmerman.

A small army of volunteers with the Friends — whose only employee has been Community Director Robyn Koustik — refurbished the venue, remodeled the lobby, ran the concession stand and kept the building staffed during events. They developed a steady stream of events, such as their semiweekly skate nights, amateur wrestling, birthday parties and other private rentals.

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Sea lion shootings sound alarm

Gunshot deaths unusually high

By SAMANTHA RAPHELSON
National Public Radio

Since September, at least eight dead sea lions that washed up on the shores of Washington state were shot and killed with guns, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Several other California sea lions are suspected to have died from “acute trauma” caused by humans, says Seal Sitters Marine Mammal Stranding Network, which responds to reports of stranded or dead sea lions. The group reported that a carcass of a sea lion with its head chopped off was found in late November along the shores of Seattle.

It’s illegal under the 1972 federal Marine Mammal Protection Act to shoot marine life, such as sea lions and dolphins. Those who violate the act can face up to \$28,520 in fines and up to a year in prison.

But that hasn’t stopped some fishermen from shooting sea lions anyway. For decades, fishermen and sea lions have been locked in a fierce battle for dominance over one of the region’s hottest commodities: salmon.

“It’s kind of a feeding frenzy at times,” says Michael Milstein, a spokesman for NOAA Fisheries, which is investigating the recent sea lion shootings. He said that the number of sea lions found shot dead is unusually high for this time of year.

The fight for salmon in the Puget Sound has grown increasingly tense in recent years, Milstein says. Puget Sound Chinook salmon have been listed under the Endangered Species Act since 1999, due to climate change and habitat loss.

Sea lions often scoop up thousands of dollars’ worth of salmon that fishermen have hooked on their lines, Milstein says. They are “smart, effective predators” with a history of aggravating fishermen, who say sea lions threaten their livelihood.

“We know that seals and sea lions ... now in Puget Sound probably consume around six times the amount of salmon that people are catching,” Milstein says. “So they have a big appetite, and the challenge is to balance that against the needs of everyone else that depends on these resources.”

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Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Sea lions compete with fishermen for prized salmon.

Local musician makes lifelong passion a career

Roadhouse rocker stays under the radar

By BRENNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Almost 40 years after moving to Seaside, Bruce Smith still meets each day with a sense of bemusement about how he got here.

Smith makes his living playing music, creating what he brands as “Texas Roadhouse Rock” — think a cross between Bruce Springsteen and U2. Since the 1980s he and his colleagues have made



six albums and gone on multiple tours throughout the West, even making a pit stop at the famous South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, one year.

This fall, Smith was awarded the Outstanding Texas Roadhouse Rock Artist at the Producers Choice Honors event, a Las Vegas awards show designed to recognize up-and-comers in entertain-

ment, for his contribution to the genre.

While he is a familiar face at many North Coast festivals and functions, Smith has built his career — and much personal glee — upon clandestinely leaving Seaside to play music across the West Coast under the radar.

“I’ve always found humor in it,” Smith said. “Maybe because it doesn’t sound real. I don’t even believe it’s real sometimes.”

Perhaps it feels surreal because of where his story starts. Smith grew up in a family with 10 kids in rural Texas.



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

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Bruce Smith, a musician, has lived in Seaside since 1980.

