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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

THE FINAL TOUCHES



The Columbia River Maritime Museum’s Mini-boat Program (fb.me/CRMMminiboats or crmm.org), designed by **Nate Sandel**, the museum’s education director, is back.

The 5-foot GPS-equipped miniboats, which will sail to Japan, are designed, built, launched and tracked by students, and this year, one of the teams is from **Warrenton Grade School**. Each U.S. team is matched up with a team of Japanese students.

In Warrenton, students “... are putting the final touches on their vessel,” **Lisa Scholin** of Noble Communications wrote. On Friday, “they worked with **Pacific Power** engineers and a solar expert to add solar-power lighting to their vessel — which happens to be **Goonies-themed**, complete with treasure map artwork.” Pictured, center, **Jon Connelly**, field engineering manager; behind him is **Stan Co**, field engineer. The photo is courtesy of Pacific Power.

“Students experimented with tiny watch batteries and miniature, red LED lights,” Lisa explained, “which twinkled on like Rudolph noses around the classroom, as students successfully created circuits.”

Mark your calendar: The **Goonies** miniboat is being launched by the **Columbia River Bar Pilots** following a Miniboat Summit prelaunch event at 10:30 a.m. Jan. 21 at the maritime museum. And then the watching and tracking armchair fun really begins — last year, one of the miniboats wound up in the South Pacific, on a remote island in the Republic of Kiribati.

DEAR SANTA ...



According to the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program, children were writing **Dear Santa letters** to newspapers by at least 1874, certain Santa could not miss a letter that had been published in a newspaper (tinyurl.com/santaltr).

Apparently, the oldest Oregon letter published is from 1890, in **The Daily Morning Astorian**, dated Dec. 19: “Dear Santa Claus; bring my little sister a doll and a doll wagon and some candy and some nuts and some peanuts, and a tin horn. Bring me an air gun and a buck saw and a knife and some candy and some nuts and some peanuts. Frank.”

And, this whopper from **The Sunday Oregonian** is dated Dec. 21, 1919: “Dear Santa Clause. I’ve been waiting for you a long time. I am nine months old. I want a trunk full of silk dresses and a necklace with my Mother’s picture and a ring, with a ruby. I’ve been a awful good girl. Arvilla.”

SANTA CALLING



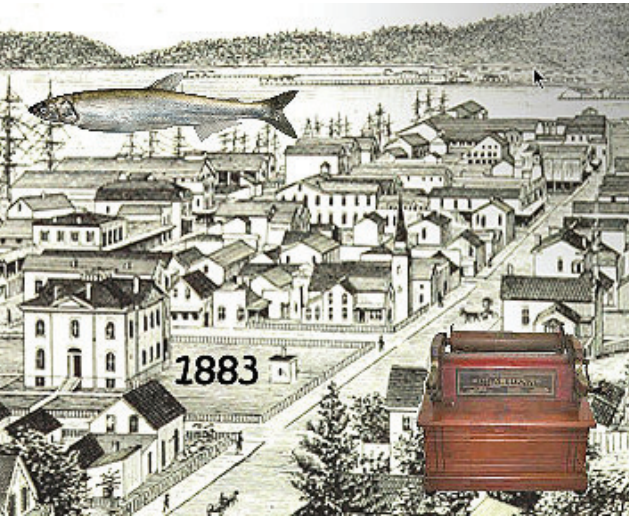
Want to create a video from Santa for that special child who puts a twinkle in your eye? Head on over to the **Portable North Pole** and get going (portablenorthpole.com).

You can create a free short video — during which **Santa** mentions the child by name — either on the website, or by using the app, which is available on Google Play.

To see how it works, you can view one created for a very mischievous cat named **Ollie** by Golly at bit.ly/PNPsanta. A screenshot is shown.

It doesn’t cost anything, and the results are a chuckle. Not to mention, the look on a child’s face when Santa is speaking to them really is priceless.

AROUND TOWN



From the Wednesday, Dec. 19, 1883, issue of *The Daily Morning Astorian*:

• **Oolachan** — **A. W. Berry** has six men employed at Rainier putting up the finely flavored Columbia River candle fish.

Note: This fish is better known as the anadromous (moves between fresh and salt water) **smelt**, or eulachon. The nickname candle fish derives from being such a fatty fish during spawning season, that if caught and dried, it could be wicked and burned like a candle. The name oolachan (aka oolichan, oulachon, and uthlecan) is apparently from the Chinook language. (bit.ly/candlesmelt)

• **Out of the Depths** — Among the articles jettisoned on the **Queen of the Pacific** when she ran aground at the mouth of the Columbia some time ago was a box containing some beautiful wedding presents, the property of **Mr. B.L. Stone** and bride. The jewels were thought irrevocably lost, but it seems that recently the case containing them was found by some wreckers on the coast ...

Note: The **Queen of the Pacific** was wrecked in September 1893 while en route to Portland with notables aboard to witness the driving of the last spike on the Northern Pacific Railroad. It took five tugs to pull her off and refloat her, at a cost of \$60,000 (about \$1.5 million now), and she was nearly a total wreck. The captain was not blamed; heavy fog and smoke caused the accident. (bit.ly/QuPac)

• **The Clariona:** Just the thing for balls and parties, a complete orchestra with dance music, figures for calling dances, etc., complete.

Note: A little research revealed this musical instrument, a reed pipe “organette roller organ,” is 10 inches square and 1 foot tall. When hand-cranked, the clariona played paper rolls that had a range of 14 notes, and it sounded like an accordion mixed with a calliope (bit.ly/clariona). To hear a clariona waltz, go to bit.ly/clarwaltz

• **Jottings around town** ... The stove business is lively. ... **B.F. Stevens & Co.** have 4,000 pieces of sheet music. ... **Jeff**, the restaurant man, feeds 600 a day. ... There are no vacant dwellings or business houses in Astoria. ... The county jail has 10 inmates. ... And the rain cometh.

HEART WARMER



“We have a house in **Bay City** that we love,” **Christine Nickerson** wrote. “In the past couple of weeks I have brought friends and family to the coast, and we spent time at local stores in **Rockaway Beach**.”

On Dec. 8, she spent the day Christmas shopping, carefully picking out items her family and friends loved at each store they had visited. “It is just one of those special years where I ‘nailed’ it on my Christmas gifts,” she observed.

Packing up the truck to head home to Sherwood, she put the gifts in a plastic bin that she secured with duct tape in the back of the truck. But when they stopped in Tillamook, she realized the tailgate was open ... and the bin was gone.

They drove back and forth to Bay City three times searching for the bin, but to no avail. On the road again, she posted on all of the local community Facebook pages, asking if anyone had found the bin.

“A couple of hours later, we were having a very sad dinner out,” Christine recalled, “and someone on Facebook commented that she found my bin, and to contact her.”

It turned out that **Bob Woldt** of Bay City found the bin on the highway in Bay City and, worried it would cause a wreck, he picked it up. Inside was a receipt from the store **Little White Church**. Bob called the store, and a woman there was able to track down Christine’s name.

After that, a Facebook search revealed Christine’s posts looking for the lost bin, and Bob and Christine were able to connect.

Bob assured her that her presents were not only safe, they were undamaged. Christine had the chance to meet him and offer her heartfelt thanks last weekend, when she retrieved her Christmas treasures.

“... People seem to be encouraged by Bob’s act of kindness,” she added. “It’s one of those stories that warms our hearts, especially at Christmastime.”

SANTA’S LITTLE HELPER



“Santa’s little helper is at it again for the second year,” proud grandmother **Brenda McKune** posted on Facebook about her 8-year-old grandson, **Dante Williams**, son of **Cliff Williams**.

Dante saves pennies all year long to be able to buy Christmas presents for other children through the **Wishing Tree program**, where children in need write gift requests on paper bell ornaments, which are hung on Christmas Wishing Trees in local businesses. People pick a tag off the tree, buy the requested present, and turn it in at a Wishing Tree collection center.

“We’re so proud of him,” Brenda declared. “Last year he collected \$96, this year it was \$142. He tried harder, and it shows. He filled all the wishes for nine children, and even got candy canes. He was so proud.”

Dante is pictured, inset, with last year’s haul, and this year with his grandpa, **Lewis McKune**.

“You know, Santa works hard,” she added, “and just needs help, like others do, sometimes. Right? Sometimes he can’t find some houses.” And that’s where Dante comes in.

By the way, Dante has already started saving again. “Grandma,” he told Brenda, “We gotta beat this amount next year.” There’s no doubt he’ll do just that.

WHERE’S SANTA?



On Christmas Eve, the North American Air Defense Command knows exactly where **Santa Claus** is, and you can track him on Tuesday night, too, on their website, noradsanta.org. Of course, there’s also an app for that.

Don’t have a computer or smartphone? Never fear, you can call 877-HiNORAD for Santa’s up-to-date location.

Santa is tracked by **Rudolph’s** bright red nose, which gives off an infrared signature — similar to that of a missile launch, apparently — allowing the defense command satellites to detect the location of Santa’s sleigh.

So how does Santa deliver all those presents in just one night? Defense command thinks that since Santa would only be able to stay only three ten-thousandths of a second in each home to get the job done — and we all know Santa takes his time getting down the chimney, stuffing stockings and eating cookies — there’s only “one logical conclusion”: Santa works in a different time-space continuum. A dandy answer for inquiring minds, don’t you think?

A PRETTY TRASHY TREE



This is such a good idea it bears repeating: The Coos Bay World newspaper lauds artist and photographer **Steven Michael Smith**, who has designed Christmas trees for the **North Bend Library** for the last decade, for coming up with a new concept this year, a “**Beach Trash Tree**” — decorated with washed up items he picked up while hiking along the beaches and dunes with his dogs (tinyurl.com/trashtree). Photos of the tree are courtesy of **Gary Sharp** at the library.

At first Steven thought he would mainly find flotsam from the 2011 Japanese tsunami, but that wasn’t the case at all. Most of what he picked up came from fishing and crabbing gear.

“As an artist,” he noted, “I knew there was potential to do something creative with such colorful trash and debris.” Mission accomplished. (*In One Ear*, Dec. 19, 2014)