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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

FINDING LOST MEMORIES



On June 15, **Tom Kelly**, of the Northwest Artifact Recovery Team, found a **military dog tag** in a vacant lot above Alameda Avenue with a metal detector. His brother, **Don Kelly** (pictured), posted the find on Facebook, hoping to find a Niemi family member.

It turned out the tag belonged **Robin Niemi Golubickas'** uncle, **Russell Stuart Niemi** (1924-1981). "Russ, as he was known to family and friends, attended schools in Astoria," Robin recalled.

"The family lived in the Walluski area, until later moving to Astoria on West Franklin and Florence avenues. He joined the Navy after graduation, and served in World War II."

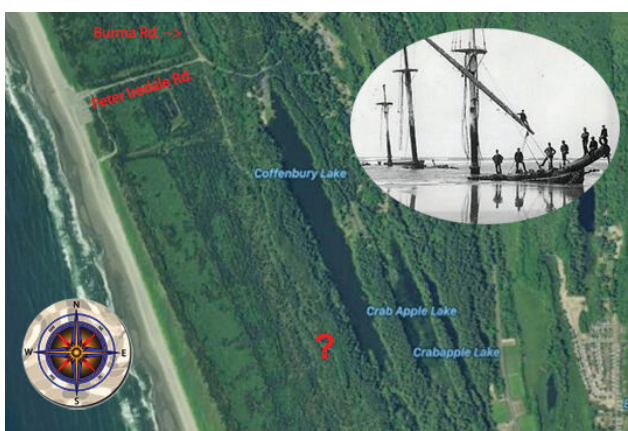
The brothers held a little presentation to give the dog tag to Robin. "We were more than happy to return it where it rightfully belonged," Don wrote.

"The family was overjoyed to receive this memento," Robin said, "and it will be treasured along with fond memories of Russ."

"After the exchange," Don added, "Robin and her husband granted us permission to detect on their farm, which also included her dad's farm. During our dig at that farm, I dug up a **small silver ring** with gold accents in the grooves of the ring. I showed the ring to Robin, and her face lit up, as she remembered the ring she once had at the age of 15.

"With that being said, we returned both of these items to the family, and we hope they will bring back some lost memories of their past. Gotta love dirt fishin'!"

WHERE ARE YOU, CAIRNSMORE?



Last week there was a story about the 1883 wreck **Lof the Cairnsmore** on Clatsop Spit and the uncertainty about its current location. Building the South Jetty caused sand to build up, and land that was once shoreline moved inland, including the site of the Cairnsmore.

"The late **Clarence Sigurdson** knew where the Cairnsmore was located," **Patrick Lines**, of Seaside, wrote. "He detailed it in his 1973 book 'Raised by the Sea.'"

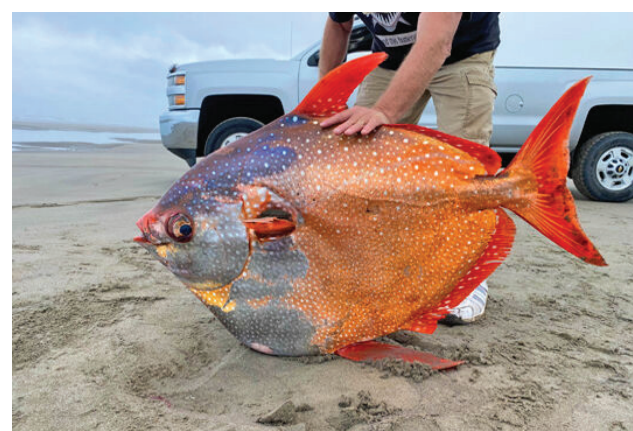
"When he was a young boy, he lived briefly at the homestead on the west side of **Coffenbury Lake**, and remembered seeing her laying partially above the sand. In the 1960s, he borrowed a large metal detector from Camp Rilea and searched for the ship. He detected a large mass laying north and south in a boggy area west of **Burma Road**.

"I had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Sigurdson at length at the 1996 Clatsop County Fair. I followed his instructions to go several hundreds of feet north on Burma Road from the east/west road at the south of Coffenbury. Look for the trail with the limbs cut off on one side of the pine trees, and stay to the left when the road forks. I found myself in one of the low-lying wet areas laying north and south in between the dunes. Could it be?"

Don Marshall's 1984 book "Oregon Shipwrecks" agrees with the location. And, in 2003, the late **Richard Fencsak** wrote about how he and his companions "trudged through a swampy morass and scrambled gingerly over logs buried in waist-high cut grass" to get to what little was left of the mostly-buried Cairnsmore wreck. The only clue he gave of the location is to find "the distinctive tree that marked our entry through a grove of shore pines."

"Unfortunately, after the Great Coastal Gale of 2007, the marked trees and the trail were wiped out," Patrick noted, but "I believe Mr. Sigurdson."

OFFBEAT OPAH



A large fish, **rare to the Oregon Coast**, was found on Sunset Beach July 14. The 3.5-foot, 100-pound opah was reported to the **Seaside Aquarium** at 8 a.m.," **Tiffany Boothe**, of the aquarium, said.

"After seeing photographs of the unusual fish, we quickly responded and recovered the fish. It created quite the stir at the aquarium, where folks were encouraged to come take a look at this beautiful and odd-looking fish." Tiffany's photo of the fish is shown.

"Opahs can grow to over 6 feet and weigh over 600 pounds. They inhabit pelagic — meaning they live in the open ocean — tropical and temperate waters, where they feed on krill and squid.

"Always on the lookout for new educational opportunities, the fish will be frozen until the school year starts," she explained. "Partnering with the **Columbia River Maritime Museum's** educational director, **Nate Sandel**, one lucky school group will get the chance to dissect this large fish.

"While rare this far north, it is not unheard of." According to The Oregonian, she added, "a 97-pound opah was caught 37 miles off of the Columbia River mouth in 2009."

The fisherman who caught it, environmental lawyer **Dave Phillips**, who was fishing for tuna at the time, took it to a Hawaiian restaurant (opah is a valuable food fish in Hawaii) in Vancouver, Washington, where it was prepared for him.

He proclaimed the fish "delicious ... I'm stuffed."

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER



Today is the 95th anniversary of the **dedication of the Astoria Column** in 1926. The artist who designed the mural on the Column, **Attilio Pusterla** (1862-1941) of New York, was known for his skill in the art of **sgraffito**, an engraving technique used by potters.

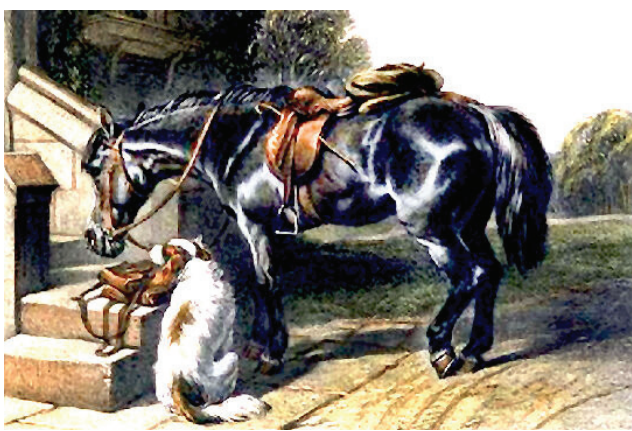
Time was tight to complete such an ambitious artwork, yet the artist and his assistants didn't arrive on the scene until mid-June. Work finally began on the Column on July 1, according to AstoriaColumn.org (which also provided the photos). A wooden structure circled the Column, and dangled from a 110-foot high platform at the top.

Pusterla would haul his drawings up onto the scaffold, then start creating a section of the sgraffito mural, a long, involved process. If he wasn't happy with the outcome from ground level, he had no qualms about trashing a day's work and starting over.

With such a painstaking approach, and so much surface to cover, only three bands of the artwork were completed by the time the Column was dedicated. But apparently nobody cared, as 8,000 showed up for the event, and three days of festivities commenced with great fanfare.

Pusterla finally finished his work on Oct. 29. With a great sigh of relief, no doubt.

FETCHED UP ALL RIGHT



From **The Daily Astorian**, **July 22, 1888**, through rain, snow, sleet and hail — and deep holes ...

• Sunday afternoon the **Astoria mail carrier**, while coming around the Bar View House point (on the way to **Tillamook**), allowed his horse to get into a deep hole and swim across the channel.

Horace Scovell managed to grasp the mail sack before it got wet (himself going into the water up to his neck) while the horse swam across the channel with a strong ebb tide at the time, and he fetched up all right at the end of the south spit.

This caused a delay to the mail until Monday.

Note: Happily, at the time, the decision to deliver mail on Sundays was left to the local postmaster.

MR. POND'S LAWSUIT

The Daily Astorian, **July 12, 1885**, included the result of a lawsuit by **William S. Pond** against the **Pacific Coast Steamship Co.**, owner of the **Queen of the Pacific** (pictured).

Pond was one of the almost 300 passengers aboard when she ran aground on Clatsop Spit on Sept. 5, 1883. And there the Queen sat, stuck and "quivering" for several hours, until rescue tugs arrived to disembark the passengers.

"Part of the cargo was served like Jonah," the newspaper reported, "while the passengers were taken off in tugs and lifeboats. According to Pond's account, he was particularly active, and aided in manning a lifeboat.

"While doing his duty like a brave man, **Mrs. Bosworth**, one of the passengers, was thrown from the deck of the Queen into the lifeboat. She landed in such a way as to almost knock the life out of Pond.

"By this unfortunate accident Pond was severely injured, and claimed that the trouble was caused by the carelessness of defendants' servants, and brought suit to recover \$25,000 in damages (\$700,200 today)."

Pond, who was "not as shallow as the name might lead one to suppose," then pulled off a shady maneuver. As soon as the lawsuit was initiated, he began side negotiations with the steamship company, and agreed to accept a \$1,000 settlement (\$28,000 today).

Once Mr. Pond had his payoff in hand, he promptly skeddaddled, "for parts unknown." Unfortunately, as a result, **Judge Matthew Paul** ordered a judgment of non-suit, leaving Pond's lawyers stuck with paying all of the costs in the case, which was "a considerable sum."

WHO GOES THERE?



An Astoria resident, who prefers to remain anonymous, found this currency (shown) while rummaging around in the **Astoria underground** in the vicinity of 14th Street and Marine Drive.

According to Numista.com, this 75 kyat bill comes from the Socialist Republic of the Union of **Burma** (1974-1988), which was renamed **Myanmar** in 1989.

On the front is Maj. Gen. **Bogyoke Aung San** (1915-1947), founder of the modern Burmese army, along with a pair of guardian Chinthe lions.

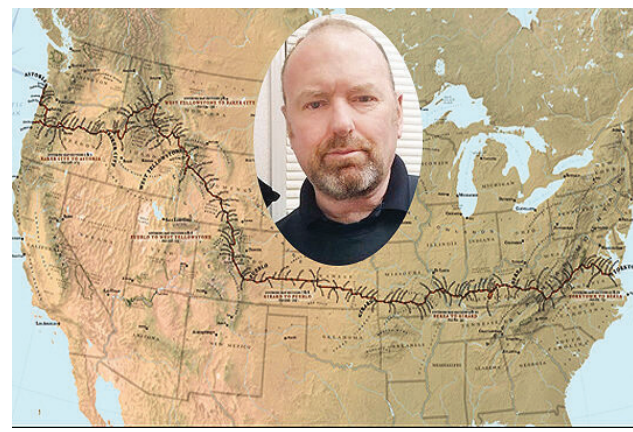
On the back is a Buddhist deity, **Lawkanat**, which Numista says is "the Guardian Spirit of the Universe, symbol of peace, joy, prosperity and artistry."

How the monty wound up in Astoria's underground is anyone's guess.

What else did the explorer see? Lots of discarded old Mason jars and car oil cans, and a very old wagon with wooden wheels ... but no other people.

"It feels like hell in the underground," he recalled. "It's hot!"

GOOD PEOPLE



The New York Times Coronavirus Briefing of July 9, under the heading "What you're doing," included this uplifting letter from **Redman Ferguson** of Nappanee, Indiana:

"After having the virus, then being fully vaccinated, I decided to live out one of my dreams: Traveling the **Trans-America Bike Trail**.

"From **Astoria** in Oregon to Yorktown in Virginia, I planned on spending 90 days doing it. Sixty-seven days later I've accomplished it, and more. I saw some of the most spectacular views this planet has to offer, but the thing that changed me most was the people I met.

"There are a lot of good people out there, but seldom do they get credit or headlines. I hope more people become like them, I know I will."