

**OBITUARIES**

**Gary Niemi**  
Westport  
March 21, 1943 — July 9, 2021

Gary Niemi was born on March 21, 1943, in Astoria, to Harold and Lillian Niemi. He passed away peacefully, in his home in Westport, on July 9, 2021, at the age of 78.

He met the love of his life, Helen Nygaard, when he was a freshman at Astoria High School in 1957.

Gary was always a hard worker, and paid his own way through college by helping his dad in his machine shop, longshoring and logging for his future brother-in-law, Martin.

He was always resourceful. While just getting by in college, one side of his suitcase read: "Astoria to OSU," and the other side, "OSU to Astoria." He married Helen in 1965, and graduated from Oregon State University in 1966 with a degree in mechanical engineering.

After college, Gary accepted a job with Boeing Co. in Seattle, and they moved to Bellevue, Washington. His love for hunting and fishing drew him to Sitka, Alaska, in 1969, where he worked at Alaska Lumber & Pulp Co.

As much as Gary loved Alaska, family always came first, and they moved back to Oregon with their three children in 1973 to be closer to family and friends. Helen and Gary raised their three children in Westport, where he worked at the Wauna paper mill until retiring in 2004.

He made a lot of good friends at the mill. Gary was a repeat champion in the mill's

annual pool tournament, and was a member of their bowling team.

He built their dream home on the Columbia River in 2007, and was able to stay there, enjoying a view of the great Columbia River until his passing.

He always enjoyed anything family-related, especially attending sporting events for his kids and grandkids and hunting and fishing. He spent 20 years making an annual elk hunting trip to Idaho with his sons, son-in-law, brothers and many close family friends.

He was a member of Faith Lutheran Church in Clatskanie.

He is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Helen Nygaard Niemi; his brother, Dennis; a half-sister, Judy Wiley; and three children, Sean, Erika and Andrew and their spouses, Heather, Miles and Kristin; and eight grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his dad, mom and brother, Warren.

His ashes will be spread at the family duck shack, where he loved spending time with friends and family. Gary will be missed; his welcoming personality and love will be cherished by the many lives that he touched.

Donations may be made in his honor to Faith Lutheran Church in Clatskanie or to Lower Columbia Hospice in Astoria.

Friends and family are invited to attend a celebration of Gary's life at the Clatskanie City Park, 300 Park St., on Friday at 5:30 p.m.



Gary Niemi

**Merry Dawn (Hughes) Zavala**  
Astoria  
Nov. 11, 1959 — July 14, 2021

Merry Dawn (Hughes) Zavala passed away quietly on July 14, 2021, in Portland, after a long battle with diabetes.

Born to Roy and Itha Hughes, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, on Nov. 11, 1959, Merry was raised with three older sisters and a younger brother.

She went to college in Boise, Idaho, was a nanny in New Jersey, and ultimately earned a master's degree and owned her own counseling service for a while in Eugene. Later, she loved living in Astoria and other Oregon Coast towns.

Leading life with a trusting heart, she continued moving forward with an infectious smile and laugh through the numerous medical, physical, financial and

emotional challenges.

Merry was in and out of hospitals and nursing care the past few years due to fall injuries, kidney failure and the resulting infections from dialysis ports and surgeries.

She was preceded in death by both parents, as well as two sisters, Iola Thompson and Renee Hughes.

She is survived by a sister, Noella (George) Roots, of Post Falls, Idaho; and a brother, Clint (Gail) Hughes, of Meridian, Idaho.

No service is scheduled at this time.

Merry and the family request that instead of flowers, friends send a memorial gift to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.



Merry Zavala

**Weyerhaeuser works toward more resilient timberlands**

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
Capital Press

ESTACADA — Private forestland owned by the timber company Weyerhaeuser lines both sides of Tumala Mountain Road near Estacada. The road marks the northern perimeter of last year's massive Riverside fire.

Steve Keniston, region forester for Weyerhaeuser in the Willamette Valley, stopped at one area where crews recently completed a thinning project designed to remove smaller trees and underbrush, referred to as "density management."

The goal, Keniston said, is two-fold. First, by cutting down undersized trees, it eliminates competition for water and nutrients with larger trees that will eventually be harvested and made into wood products.

Second, smaller trees clustered next to bigger ones can act as "ladder fuels" during a catastrophic wildfire, Keniston said. That allows flames to climb from the forest into the canopy where they are much more difficult to contain.

"Density management is one of our key tools," Keniston said, discussing the company's approach to forest management.

Weyerhaeuser owns approximately 2.7 million acres in Oregon and Washington state, according to the company's website.

Last year, 125,000 acres owned by the company burned in four large blazes across the Willamette and Umpqua valleys in western Oregon, including the Riverside, Beachie Creek, Holiday Farm and Archie Creek fires.

This year is proving to be another scorcher, with the Northwest Interagency



George Plaven/Capital Press

**Steve Keniston, region forester for Weyerhaeuser, shows a young seedling as part of replanting efforts on the company's land following last year's Riverside fire near Estacada.**

Coordination Center in Portland reporting 820,129 acres burning in large fires across Oregon and Washington, versus 40,023 acres at this same time last year.

The Bootleg fire in south-central Oregon accounts for about half of those acres.

Carol Connelly, spokeswoman for the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center, said fire season in the Pacific Northwest typically doesn't peak until mid-August.

"This fire season just started off with more large fires than we've seen in the past," Connelly said. "We haven't even plateaued yet."

As wildfires grow bigger and hotter in the West, Keniston said Weyerhaeuser is working not only to prevent large blazes, but contain them quickly before they can devastate neighboring communities.

"Our primary strategy, really, is that initial attack and keeping fires small," he said.

Driving farther into the

Weyerhaeuser property, the effects of the Riverside fire become increasingly apparent. Blackened logs and tree stumps dot the hillsides, while green vegetation has started to regrow out of the dusty soil.

Weyerhaeuser is now replanting the burned acres, which Keniston said they are aiming to complete by 2024. An intense heat wave in late June hasn't made that easy, with many of the newly planted seedlings already dried and brittle.

Approximately 5 miles to the south, Keniston explained how Weyerhaeuser oversaw firefighters and contractors making their stand to prevent the fire from merging with the Beachie Creek fire within the company's Molalla tree farm.

The effort is an example of the state's complete and coordinated system for fighting fires, in collaboration with other land management agencies and private forest operators.

Nick Hennemann, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Forestry, said landowners such as Weyerhaeuser play a major role in the system.

"They're an integral part of the Oregon firefighting team," Hennemann said. "These are people who know the land and how to operate forestry equipment, often in difficult terrain."

The need for a complete and coordinated system is acknowledged in Oregon statute to protect the state's forestry resources. Once the fire bell rings, Hennemann said local dispatch centers will find the closest available resources to begin the initial attack.

More than 95% of fires are contained at 10 acres or less, Hennemann said.

**OBITUARY POLICY**

The Astorian publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include a small photo and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. The deadline for all obituaries is 9 a.m. the business day prior.

Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style. Death notices and upcoming services will be published at no charge. Notices must be submitted by 9 a.m. the day of publication.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at [DailyAstorian.com/forms/obits](http://DailyAstorian.com/forms/obits), by email at [ewilson@dailyastorian.com](mailto:ewilson@dailyastorian.com), placed via the funeral home or in person at The Astorian office, 949 Exchange St. in Astoria.

For more information, call 503-325-3211, ext. 257.

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WEATHER PERMITTING

**SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA**

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
69 55	69 58	66 59	65 54	68 55	67 54	67 55
Breezy in the p.m.	Breezy in the p.m.	Low clouds	Cloudy, showers around	Chance of a shower	A shower possible	Partly sunny

**ALMANAC**  
Astoria through Sunday

**Temperatures**

High/low	66/57
Normal high/low	68/55
Record high	83 in 2017
Record low	43 in 1987

**Precipitation**

Sunday	0.02"
Month to date	0.02"
Normal month to date	0.02"
Year to date	37.51"
Normal year to date	38.02"

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2021

**UNDER THE SKY**  
Tonight's Sky: After sunset, brilliant Venus and faint Mars low west.  
Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

**SUN AND MOON**  
Sunrise today: 6:00 a.m.  
Sunset tonight: 8:43 p.m.  
Moonrise today: 1:26 a.m.  
Moonset today: 5:28 p.m.

**TODAY'S TIDES**

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
11:08 a.m.	5.3	4:48 a.m.	0.6	
10:07 p.m.	7.1	4:10 p.m.	3.8	
<b>Cape Disappointment</b>				
11:06 a.m.	5.0	4:06 a.m.	0.3	
9:52 p.m.	7.1	3:34 p.m.	3.6	
<b>Hammond</b>				
11:09 a.m.	5.2	4:23 a.m.	0.6	
9:58 p.m.	7.3	3:48 p.m.	3.5	
<b>Warrenton</b>				
11:03 a.m.	5.7	4:32 a.m.	0.7	
10:02 p.m.	7.5	3:54 p.m.	3.4	
<b>Knappa</b>				
11:45 a.m.	5.6	5:49 a.m.	0.5	
10:44 p.m.	7.4	5:11 p.m.	2.8	
<b>Depoe Bay</b>				
10:26 a.m.	5.4	3:39 a.m.	0.9	
9:05 p.m.	7.4	2:58 p.m.	4.0	

**NATIONAL CITIES**

City	Today	Wed.
Atlanta	82/69/t	82/68/t
Boston	81/67/c	75/64/pc
Chicago	81/62/s	83/64/s
Dallas	89/73/pc	90/72/pc
Denver	81/63/pc	83/62/t
Honolulu	86/76/pc	87/76/pc
Houston	90/74/t	92/73/pc
Los Angeles	88/64/s	85/63/s
Miami	87/81/t	90/80/pc
New York City	80/66/c	80/66/pc
Phoenix	110/87/pc	112/88/pc
San Francisco	70/55/pc	67/57/pc
Wash., DC	81/68/c	84/67/pc

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

**REGIONAL FORECAST**

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

City	Today	Wed.
Baker City	93/54/pc	96/56/pc
Brookings	63/52/pc	60/52/pc
Ilwaco	65/56/s	65/56/c
Newberg	95/62/s	94/61/s
Newport	62/50/s	62/52/pc
North Bend	65/53/s	65/55/pc
Roseburg	96/64/s	94/62/s
Seaside	67/55/pc	68/55/c
Springfield	96/61/s	97/57/s
Vancouver	93/64/s	93/64/s