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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

## A HARD PROBLEM



The Daily Morning Astorian reported that the 176-foot long schooner **Solano** was driven ashore by a storm early in the morning on Feb. 5, 1907, about 4 miles north of **Ocean Park, Washington**. The North Head lifesaving crew promptly rescued all nine aboard.

The **Grays Harbor Tug Co.** was hired to have a tug standing by once the salvors were ready to refloat the schooner in July. But when the **Solano** was almost afloat again, a hawser parted, and she fell back onto the beach, where she stayed.

The Oregon Daily Journal of Aug. 3, 1907, offered this summer update: "... The **Solano**, a four-masted sailing vessel ... is standing perfectly erect, embedded in the sand ..."

"To the landsman, the ship seems in perfect condition, but the captain, who is living with his family on the wreck, realizes that a hard problem is before him to accomplish his task in again launching his vessel into the sea, which is his intention as soon as bad weather sets in and the tides are high enough ..."

In early December, a final attempt was made to float the **Solano**, and the **Grays Harbor Tugboat Co.** vessel **Daring** was supposed to be on hand to assist. High tide came, all was ready, and the workmen waited. And waited. The tug never arrived, and a sudden storm essentially smashed the **Solano** to pieces.

The schooner stayed where she was, a total loss. Over the years, she gradually sank into the sand.

## RIGHT AS RAIN



The monthly, wintery, summary and yearly rainfall in Astoria is sometimes a subject of inquiry," **The Daily Morning Astorian** noted on **Feb. 3, 1888**.

Consequently, a table, gleaned from "official sources" was presented with annual rainfalls over a span of four years, from Jan. 1, 1884 to Dec. 31, 1887.

The results are as follows: 1884, 49.38 inches; 1885, 56.16 inches; 1886, 71.59 inches; and 1887, 92.09 inches. That makes an average of 67.3 inches per year over the four-year period. The highest rainfall in any one month was a water-logged **18.24 inches**, in January 1887.

Based on National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration data, Astoria's annual rainfall average from 2010 to the present is 90.4 inches, and the wettest day during that period was on Dec. 20, 2019, when 7.2 inches fell.

Aren't you glad you weren't around in January 1887?

## MOVING SOUTH



The humpback whale that washed ashore north of Silver Point has been making its way south," the **Seaside Aquarium** posted on Facebook Jan. 28, along with the photo shown. Silver Point is a bit south of **Cannon Beach**.

"It is currently on the north end of Arcadia Beach (about 1 mile south of Cannon Beach). The larger bones you see protruding from the front of the whale are its jaw bones.

"So how long does it take for a whale to decompose on the beach? It varies depending on the size, decomposition and time of year. We documented a gray whale that washed ashore on the north end of the Long Beach, Washington, Peninsula. It took approximately eight months for the whale to decompose."

## DO YOU RECALL?



Last week, canoeist **Neal Moore** was revisiting **Floyd Holcom** at Pier 39. Neal recently completed an almost two-year journey traveling waterways across the country from west to east in his canoe, starting from Astoria, and chronicled at **22Rivers.com**

While his journey was successful, Neal is thinking about two canoeists who attempted a similar venture, leaving from Astoria on March 1, 1978 — heading for the mouth of the Kennebec River in Maine — whose journey had a tragic end.

"New Englanders **Pete Macridis**, 25, and **Timothy Black**, 23, vanished ... above (the) Bonneville Dam on March 11, 1978," Neal wrote. "The duo had years of paddling and guiding experience and, like myself, had spent a year of planning every aspect of their journey across the nation ..."

"The AP reported westerly winds had been blowing at about 20 to 25 mph that day. Two years ago, when I passed this way, and had just learned of the duo's demise from fellow long-distance paddler and friend, **Norm Miller**, I got in trouble with a westerly wind at 15 mph, with gusts up to 20.

"I made two attempts at my journey. Once in 2018 and again in 2020. Coming through the Columbia River Gorge was treacherous on both occasions for me. The second time, I took video of the exact spot where the duo of young paddlers were last seen. I reflected as I paddled ... on what transpired that fateful, final day of their expedition."

The paddlers' canoe washed ashore on the Washington state side on March 12, about 10 miles east of the Bonneville Dam, a newspaper report said. Their packs, paddles, clothes and life jackets were floating offshore. Black's body was found on March 14; Macridis' body was never found. Clippings and video are at [bit.ly/GorgeMissing](http://bit.ly/GorgeMissing)

"I'd like to include the duo in the book I'm working on," Neal said, "and to meet anybody here who met them, or chronicled their departure, would be really great." Does anyone recall these two canoeists' visit to Astoria? If so, please email [ewilson@dailyastorian.com](mailto:ewilson@dailyastorian.com) or call 971-704-1718.

## SILVIE'S MYSTERY



In November 1849, with owner **Capt. William Gray** at the helm, the **Silvie** (or **Sylvie** or **Sylvia**) de Grasse sailed down the Columbia River with a cargo of lumber bound for San Francisco, and anchored off Astoria to await a pilot. Once the pilot came aboard, the ship weighed anchor, but a bit prematurely, as the crew had not yet dropped the canvas.

In no time, the ship drifted right into a ledge off **Tongue Point** and got stuck. Normally, a change of tide would make refloating possible, but Gray had so overloaded his ship, that when she shifted, she wedged herself in even tighter, and was permanently stuck. Everything possible was removed, but what happened to one item that was salvaged, a **medicine chest**, is still a mystery. What happened to it?

Well, **The Daily Morning Astorian** of **Feb. 3, 1900**, may have the answer: "It will be remembered that the vessel was an old New York packet, built of live oak and locust. Considerable historic interest is attached to her, from the fact that she was the vessel which brought to the U.S. the first news of the French Revolution.

"Yesterday's Oregonian says that through the kindness of **Dr. O. B. Estes** of Astoria, the **Oregon Historical Society** has become the custodian of the medicine chest of the old ship **Silvie de Grasse**, which he has owned for a number of years.

"... When (the ship was) dismantled, the chest became the property of **James A. Welch** (1816-1876), a pioneer of 1844, who built the first frame house in Astoria, and whose wife, **Nancy Dickerson Welch** (1818-1896), was the first American woman to become a resident of the place.

"When Welch died his son, **John W. Welch** (1846-1925) fell heir to it, and he gave it to Dr. Estes. The chest is 18 inches long by 12 inches in width and depth, and is made of rosewood."

The Ear has reached out to the Oregon Historical Society to see if they do, indeed, have the missing medicine chest. Stay tuned.

## FANTASTIC NOISE



Fun rerun: In late January 1939, **Pan American Airways** flew its 74-passenger **Boeing Flying Boat**, the largest passenger airplane ever built, into Astoria from Seattle, landing in the river off **Tongue Point**. The deafening arrival was big news, and thousands showed up from Astoria and surrounding communities.

According to Boeing, only 12 clippers were made between 1938 and 1941, each having a 152-foot wing span, with a cruising speed of 184 mph. By the end of 1939, the clippers were providing luxury flights across the Pacific with catered gourmet meals from top-drawer hotels, and were the aircraft "stars" of the day.

A second clipper from Seattle landed at Tongue Point in February 1939 and, despite the snowy, cold weather, a significant crowd showed up to see that landing, as well.

The photo shown was taken by 18-year-old **Donald Hemingway** when he visited the World's Fair in San Francisco in 1939. His son, **Roger Hemingway**, who sent in the photo, believes they are the same two clippers that landed in Astoria.

"The noise must have been fantastic," Roger noted, "and the landing amazing to watch." (*In One Ear*, 3/7/2014)

## SO BLESSED



"I don't play much," **Jimmy Wilburn Jr.**, of **Rainier**, said, "but I knew I had some **Powerball** tickets in my billfold, and I thought I should check them."

He bought the tickets in August, but didn't get around to checking them until Jan. 20, when he finally went to the store where he bought them, the **Alston Country Store** in Rainier, to find out if he had any winning tickets. He was shocked to find out that one was a \$50,000 **Powerball** winner.

Wilburn had a \$2 **Powerball** ticket that was only one number off from hitting the \$258 million jackpot for the Aug. 14 drawing. His quick-pick numbers were 6-21-49-65-66 with the **Powerball** number of 18. The winning numbers were the same as Wilburn's except for the 66; the number drawn was 67.

On Jan. 21, he went to the Oregon Lottery Payment Center in Salem to claim his prize. "I feel so blessed to have won \$50,000," Wilburn said. "I am just fine with this prize."

## FISH TALK



It's common knowledge that whales, porpoises and **lorcas** communicate with various noises, so **Cornell University** researchers wondered if regular old fish are communicating, too. Consequently, they studied ray-finned fish, which are 99% of the world's known fish species. Pictured, a longspine squirrelfish, courtesy of **Cornell**.

The answer: **Fish do talk**. "... Fish are far more likely to communicate with sound than generally thought," a recent study says, "and some fish have been doing this for at least 155 million years." The topics? Sex, food and territory.

"Fish do everything," researcher **Aaron Rice** said. "... at this point, nothing would surprise me about fishes and the sounds that they can make."