

OBITUARIES

Rod Nichols

Warrenton

Oct. 6, 1952 — April 25, 2022

In loving memory: One of my two best friends died recently. When I say best friends, I mean someone who would do anything for you, no questions asked.

Someone who will tell you the truth, even when it would be easier and more comfortable not to. Someone who always has time for you, who shares their joy and pain and secrets.

Those people are rare, and because they're rare, they are precious. To have two such people in my life is largesse beyond anything I would ever have imagined possible. Now one of them is gone.

At 69 years old, Rod Nichols died way too soon. If I was a philosophical sort, I would say that whenever we take our leave, we're right on time. I am decidedly not that sort. I am heartbroken, and not a little ticked off.

I admit there could have been no time ever that I would be gracious about losing Rod. He was quietly, steadfastly good. He was patient and generous, scary smart and wickedly funny.

He was always game. And he was kind. Abidingly kind. It takes fortitude and effort, and so very much heart, to be consistently kind. Rod is the only person in my experience who managed it.

I met Rod in 1993, when we were both neck deep in the restaurant biz. Over the years we shared our experiences of countless kitchens, where we did everything from washing the dishes to mopping the floors at the end of shift. Rod often cooked. I did the world a favor, and kept to the front of the house, well away from the stove.

We struggled to balance the books, keep good help and make a buck. Rod succeeded for far longer than the expected lifespan of a restaurant. He owned and worked at Vista Sea Cafe on Broadway in Seaside for 19 years, employing legions of Seaside kids along the way.

Rod was an artist by nature and by training. I loved his stories of leaving art school and moving to Paris to paint; of his friends and adventures there. In 2019, I traveled to Europe with both of my best friends, Norma Hernandez and

Rod. Seeing Barcelona and Bilbao and Bordeaux through Rod's eyes was a revelation.

Art museums were a whole other thing when we went with Rod. He would wander off to follow the muse that only he could hear. Norma and I would follow the map from room to room, and inevitably find the bar where we would absorb the culture around us with the benefit of a cold beverage.

Eventually Rod would find us and, over a cocktail, tell us about things he saw. He saw them the way the artists must have hoped they would be seen.

Over many dinners, over many years, Rod and I shared stories and tried to justify our common weaknesses. Among them, countless dogs that needed rescuing, the tendency to volunteer until spare time was only a concept and marriages that went south (three each). I finally got the marriage thing right on the fourth try. Rod didn't live long enough to even the score.

I am not a crier. I have lost grandparents, parents, a beloved aunt and a brother, shedding very few tears in the process. My heart's compass always swings toward thankfulness. Thankfulness that I had them in my life. That is a very big thing, that having someone exceptional in your life thing. It leaves little room for tears.

My beloved husband, Tom, and I have inherited Rod's dog, "Spud." All 15 years and 14 pounds of him. He is virtually deaf. He has only two teeth cruelly placed upper right and lower left. He has arthritis, takes pills with every meal and is an austere judge of character. For some reason, he likes me. It's probably the home-cooked doggie dinners.

Whatever the reason, I love this little dog of Rod's. I talk to him relentlessly, never caring that he can't hear me. I talk to him about Rod, and he rewards me with a fierce loyalty that won't allow him to be more than a foot from my side.

I haven't cried for the loss of Rod Nichols. I'm just too grateful to be maudlin. But, I will absolutely cry when Spud dies. Rod knew this about me. — Merianne Myers

Mark Dennis Valdez

Fox Island, Washington

Jan. 18, 1953 — Jan. 13, 2022



Mark Valdez

Longtime Astorian Mark Dennis Valdez passed away Jan. 13, 2022, while living with family on Fox Island in Washington state.

Mark moved to Astoria from Oakland, California, where he started his welding career at Bumble Bee Seafoods. Mark then moved on to teaching at Tongue Point Job Corps Center as a welding instructor.

The connection with the U.S. Coast Guard and the buoy maintenance program made Mark a perfect fit to become superintendent at Ogilvie Co. Inc., and leading Ogilvie in winning the nationwide buoy contract manufacturing buoys to go coast to coast.

Mark thrived in this industry before moving to California and starting his own steel fabrication company. Being bought out by his partner he had taken on, Mark then retired, and moved around the West Coast from San Diego up to Seattle, along with adven-

turing to live in Mexico.

Mark is survived by five daughters and 11 grandchildren, all of whom reside in the Pacific Northwest, which is what drew him back in his final days. Mark enjoyed being around his family, the ocean and most of all, his vehicles.

Mark was also a Vietnam War veteran with the Marine Corps. He proudly lived by his sworn oath throughout his life.

Please come and join his family and friends for a final military salute, along with a celebration of his life, on Saturday at 2 p.m., in Shelter C at Coffenbury Lake, inside Fort Stevens State Park. All are welcome.

Hospital: Introduces planned expansion

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The event far exceeded the fundraising goal of \$250,000, Kujala said. He thanked the volunteers from the hospital and the community who helped run the event.

Attendees were introduced to a future plan to expand the Astoria hospital.

"While the current hospital has been well-maintained, it

lacks expandability and is vulnerable to earthquakes, tremors or tsunamis," Erik Thorsen, Columbia Memorial's CEO, said in a statement. "We need a new, resilient health care facility that will endure and help the community thrive for the next 50 years."

The entirety of the funds from the event will go toward the project, Kujala said. The hospital is not disclosing details about the expansion at this time.

"It's just the planning stages, so we don't really have any detail about what that's going to look like. But this is kind of the start of looking to the next chapter of Columbia Memorial Hospital," said Kujala, who also serves as chairman of the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners. "We'll probably have more to share toward the end of the year or 2023 in regards to the foundation and how we fit into any future plans."

Gill: Mental health should be the focus going forward

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innovation officer, took on the role of interim director in 2017 before being appointed to the position by Gov. Kate Brown the next year.

Gill pointed to the challenges teachers and staff faced throughout the pandemic, saying that the transition to distance learning turned "every single teacher in Oregon into a first-year teacher."

The director also made note of the work to limit virus cases to prevent overburdening the

region's health care system.

"I put educators right next to our health care workers as the true heroes of this pandemic, at least in the state of Oregon," he said.

Looking ahead, Gill said Oregon has developed a strong framework for success, but added there is still substantial work to be done.

"I know that we're continuing to work on what needs to happen next for our students and the mental health impacts for our students and their families and

for educators as well," he said, noting that mental health should be the focus going forward.

As racial diversity increases in public schools in Oregon, Gill said, a more equitable approach needs to be taken to serve minority communities while also maintaining educational rigor and high expectations.

"I think these two years have shown us what we're capable of, that we can create opportunity to see more people working together and communicating together," he said.

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BURGER KING

SATURDAY, MAY 14TH 10AM-4PM

350 MARINE DR., ASTORIA

Leading with Energy, Engagement and Empathy

SCAN ME

SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
52 41	55 48	58 50	59 47	57 45	56 43	55 45

ALMANAC

Astoria through Tuesday

Temperatures

High/low 56/37
 Normal high/low 60/45
 Record high 86 in 1941
 Record low 34 in 1967

Precipitation

Tuesday 0.01"
 Month to date 2.40"
 Normal month to date 1.27"
 Year to date 34.90"
 Normal year to date 32.74"

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2022

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Hercules climbs the eastern sky this evening.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today 5:47 a.m.
 Sunset tonight 8:38 p.m.
 Moonrise today 4:37 p.m.
 Moonset today 4:22 a.m.

Full Last New First
 May 15 May 22 May 30 June 7

TODAY'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
	11:10 a.m.	6.4	5:20 a.m.	1.6
	11:34 p.m.	7.8	5:21 p.m.	1.1
Cape Disappointment	10:47 a.m.	6.3	4:43 a.m.	1.8
	11:11 p.m.	7.8	4:37 p.m.	1.3
Hammond	11:00 a.m.	6.7	5:01 a.m.	1.7
	11:24 p.m.	8.1	4:57 p.m.	1.2
Warrenton	11:05 a.m.	6.8	5:04 a.m.	1.7
	11:29 p.m.	8.2	5:05 p.m.	1.2
Knappa	11:47 a.m.	6.7	6:21 a.m.	1.4
	none		6:22 p.m.	1.0
Depoe Bay	10:02 a.m.	6.2	4:09 a.m.	1.6
	10:25 p.m.	7.8	4:02 p.m.	1.1

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Fri.
Atlanta	79/62/s	75/62/c
Boston	66/55/pc	69/62/pc
Chicago	86/65/pc	86/65/s
Dallas	94/71/pc	93/73/pc
Denver	71/44/s	78/46/s
Honolulu	85/73/s	84/72/s
Houston	93/70/s	94/73/pc
Los Angeles	80/61/s	87/61/s
Miami	84/71/t	87/74/sh
New York City	72/58/pc	71/60/sh
Phoenix	89/63/s	96/69/s
San Francisco	63/51/pc	69/53/s
Wash., DC	69/60/pc	71/62/sh

REGIONAL FORECAST

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

City	Today	Fri.	City	Today	Fri.
Baker City	56/35/sh	57/42/pc	North Bend	53/42/r	57/53/r
Brookings	52/47/r	53/52/r	Roseburg	55/43/r	61/52/r
Ilwaco	52/43/r	54/47/sh	Seaside	53/40/r	55/48/c
Newberg	54/37/r	57/47/sh	Springfield	55/40/r	60/51/r
Newport	51/40/r	53/49/sh	Vancouver	54/41/r	57/49/sh