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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

FORT UNDER FIRE



Tuesday was the 80th anniversary of the shelling of Fort Stevens during World War II. On June 21, 1942, Cmdr. Meiji Tagami slipped his I-25 submarine into the mouth of the Columbia River with some incoming fishing boats, surfaced and fired 17 shells at the fort from his 5.5-inch cannon.

An in-depth video, “The Attack on Fort Stevens,” describes the reaction at the fort. “Everybody’s running around trying to get out,” Lester Madison recalled, “and I had to stop them at the head of the stairs to get them to go ... get their clothes on before they went outside.”

The searchlights were not turned on to keep the fort’s position hidden. The same logic was probably used in the decision not to return fire — along with the belief that the submarine was out of range.

Edwin Jolley recalled that when he relayed the order to Battery Russell not to shoot back, they wanted to know on whose authority. Col. Carl S. Doney, the commanding officer at Fort Stevens, grabbed the phone and personally ordered the battery not to fire even one round, or he’d court-martial the whole 249th Coast Artillery.

The shells that hit caused craters on the beach, a baseball backstop and tree were damaged, a power line was nicked, then failed, and a soldier cut his head while rushing to his battle station. Pictured, some soldiers examining a shell crater.

U.S. Air Force planes on a training mission spotted the I-25, and reported Tagami’s location to a bomber. Although he found the target, the sub dodged the bombs and submerged unscathed.

The surprise attack sent shivers of fear up and down the West Coast. On the North Coast, the reaction was to string barbed wire from Point Adams in Hammond southward to fend off an invasion, and the Peter Iredale shipwreck was tangled up in barbed wire until the end of World War II.

SCARED TO DEATH



The June 21, 1942, shelling of Fort Stevens may have given everyone at the fort a good scare, but what about the civilians who lived in the vicinity?

The photo shown appeared in newspapers all over the country. This particular version had the following outline: “Donna Jean Heffling, 3, hands Col. Carl S. Doney, commanding officer Columbia River harbor defenses, a shell fragment picked up near her home in Seaside, Oregon, on June 25, 1942. Her sister, Jean, 9, stands by. The Heffling home was within few hundred yards of one of nine craters, but undamaged.”

Well, OK, so they got the date wrong, the photo was actually taken June 22, and the Heffling farm wasn’t in Seaside, either.

Other papers only ran a small story as a follow-up to the shelling. This one is from the Wilmington (North Carolina) Morning Star on June 23, 1942: “I was scared to death,” said Mrs. Heffling, and her husband echoed agreement. Three-year old Donna Jean Heffling fell out of bed in fright, but her brother, Keith, 10, wasn’t awakened.” (Bob Glander/AP Photo)

WINNING ATTITUDE

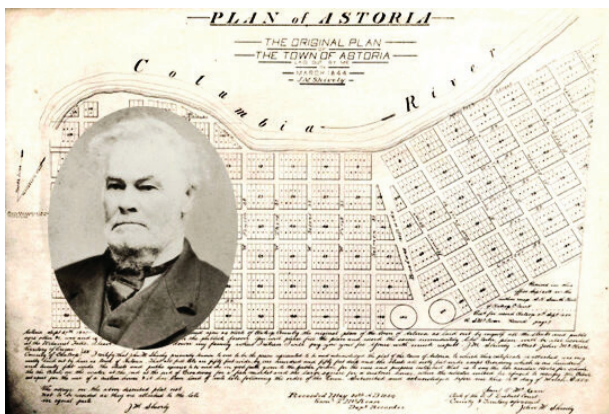


The Whole Earth Man V Horse Race, over a 22.5-mile course in Llanwrtyd Wells, Wales, was won by the aptly named Ricky Lightfoot, BBC.com reports.

When he crossed the finish line, Lightfoot had no idea he’d won, since the people and horses take different routes. Yet he came in two minutes ahead of 1,000 runners and 50 horses, telling CNN he was “chuffed to have won.” He’s only the third human to win since 1980; the last time was in 2007, and the first was in 2004.

“I thought I could give the horse a good race,” he explained. And so he did. (Photo: Yen.com.gh)

SHIVELY’S CABIN



The Daily Astorian, on June 26, 1883, included a letter to the editor from Oregon pioneer, John M. Shively, who helped map out early Astoria.

Shively opined that if Sir Francis Drake had come as far north as the Columbia River in 1579, “... about 10 miles up the river, south side, he might have found a village of ... buccaneers enjoying themselves by a rousing fire made of spruce limbs, with plenty of corn beef and pork, a barge and all other appliances to repair their fleet.

“... In 1844, I built my log cabin a mile above (meaning upriver of) the old fort of J.J. Astor (at 15th and Exchange streets), and proceeded to clear a garden. In spading up the ground about 8 inches deep, I came to many beef bones, evidently the bones from corn beef, horn handles of table knives with other kitchen implements of by-gone days.

“It is evident that all iron from length of time has oxidized to dust, for the old horn handles had once held a blade. The place was grown up with maple, spruce and hemlock with nothing to distinguish it from the adjacent forest. The trees cut down and burnt showed a square hillock about 6 feet high.

“Curiosity led me to dig into it, I came to charcoal, and on further examining the place came to the logs of the house which the charcoal had preserved from decay. It must have taken many years to oxidize all iron and bury these things 8 inches beneath the surface ...

“The place is on Lot 8, Block 2, Shively’s Astoria, where anyone can go and see traces of the coal to this day. The coal would be abundant but was carried away for blacksmith purposes years ago.”

Liisa Penner, archivist at the Clatsop County Historical Society, explained where this lot was. “Shively’s first home was supposedly at 1416 Grand in 1954,” she wrote, “which changed to the current address of 3024 Grand.”

As to whom the kitchen utensil-wielding visitors were, one guess it was probably not buccaneers, but quite possibly the Lewis and Clark Expedition instead, since they stopped at Tongue Point in March 1806 after wintering at Fort Clatsop.

HONORING BACCA



“Donation Day!” Laura Parker wrote June 13, about her son, Jameson. “Today these golden locks will be on their way to another kiddo in need of a hair replacement.

“When Jameson’s Bacca (his grandfather, “Scotty” Parker) was diagnosed with cancer, he became aware of the struggles that people going through cancer treatment were facing. (Jameson named him Bacca when he was about 1.) My dad was Jameson’s best friend. Watching my dad struggle with cancer was really difficult for Jameson.”

So, Jameson talked to his mom about how they could help others who were suffering with cancer treatment. “He thought growing his hair to donate could be a way,” she explained. “So he started growing his hair out. He is now over the length requirement, and is ready to have a short summer hair cut!

“He asked me last month if his friend Cutter’s mom, Kelly Barendse, could be the one to cut his hair. Jameson had some trouble during wrestling after the loss of his Bacca, and Cutter helped him through it. Cutter encouraged Jameson, and cheered for him every match, and even offered an arm around him when Jameson was really missing his Bacca.

“Jameson had decided to donate to Wigs for Kids. Each wig made for a child includes 150,000 strands of hair, and has a cost of about \$1,800. We would love to include a financial contribution with his hair donation.” To help out, go to: bit.ly/WigsKids

‘CUDDLEBUTT’



A half-husky, half-Newfoundland (who looks like an enormous black Lab) named “Cuddlebutt” was inadvertently dognapped June 12 in Tillamook County when some thieves stole his owners’ vehicle, a Nissan Pathfinder with Montana plates, and he was taken along for the ride. Naturally, the owners were frantic.

That’s the bad news. The good news and photo came on June 16 from the Tillamook County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page, when David McCall found the vehicle and the purloined Cuddlebutt:

“... Cuddlebutt has been located safe and sound, and is with TCSO deputies,” the post said. “He will be reunited with his humans shortly. Oh yeah, the stolen Nissan Pathfinder was also recovered, but we all know what everyone was really concerned about ...

“According to TCSO Cpl. Chris Barnett, Cuddlebutt does indeed live up to his name, and he provided many kisses and hugs to Deputy Chris Rondeau.”

“... He drank all of the water from my water bottle,” Barnett said. “Then he thanked us. He is definitely a lover.”

IT’S PUZZLING



The largest plant in the world has been determined by researchers, and it’s not a tree, NewAtlas.com reports. Actually it’s a seagrass meadow off the western Australian coast, in Shark Bay, that is 112 miles long.

It was discovered when scientists from the University of Western Australia and Flinders University were studying the genetic diversity of seagrass in the Shark Bay area, and took shoot samples from several sections. It was while they were examining the 18,000 genetic markers that they came to a stunning conclusion: The meadow has grown from one seedling, which is constantly cloning itself.

“The answer blew us away — there was just one!” Jane Edgeloe, lead author of the study, said. “That’s it, just one plant has expanded over 112 miles in Shark Bay, making it the largest known plant on Earth.” Even more amazing: The scientists calculated the plant is at least 4,500 years old. (Photo: University of Western Australia)

SAVED AT LAST



Rescue rerun: The maritime world was agog over a film clip of Harrison Okene’s rescue that made the local and national news. Harrison, pictured in a still shot from the video, was the cook aboard the Jascon 4, who survived by finding an air bubble when the vessel capsized and sank off the coast of Nigeria. He was stuck in the upside-down tug, which lay under 100 feet of water, for three days.

All of the crew were presumed dead, and Harrison was found purely by accident when a team from DCN Diving, who were filming their operation underwater, arrived on the scene searching for bodies. The video can be seen here: bit.ly/HarOkene. (Spoiler alert: There’s a genuine goose-bump moment when the cook’s hand reaches out of the darkness toward the diver.) After making it to the surface and decompressing for two days, amazingly, he was fine. (In One Ear, 12/13/2013)