

Parks Foundry completes whale of a job

Bronze sculpture shipped to Alaska in pieces

By Stephen Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Anyone who drove by Parks Foundry along Golf Course Road in Enterprise last month probably noted a large whale — or rather, half a whale — soaking up sunshine on a stanchion. The 23-foot-tall bronze whale is the creation of renowned artist and sculptor R.T. “Skip” Wallen, who built the sculpture for the Juneau Whale Project in Alaska.

The bronze was intended to celebrate Alaska’s 50th year of statehood (2009), but unavoidable delays set back the \$3 million project. Foundry owner Steve Parks has a 20-year working relationship and friendship with Wallen. Parks explained the reason for the delay: “We started talking about the project in 2007. As it’s financed by private donations, we’ve been proceeding as we can over the years.”

Nonetheless, the finished product is a marvel.

The bronze features the upper half of a breaching humpback whale arching backward and spiraling in a left roll. When in place, the immense bronze will appear to rise from a pool of water. An artist’s rendering on the Juneau Whale Project website shows water pumping through the sculpture to make the viewing experience as life-like as possible. The latter part proved a bit of a challenge for the



Courtesy Photo
The smaller, 8-foot version of the whale at its home at the University of Alaska in Anchorage.

foundry.

“It was pretty labor intensive,” Parks said. “A fountain specialist in Florida contracted all that stuff ... it became a little less trouble because he gave us good direction in showing us what we needed to do.”

Putting the whale together from the top down increased difficulty. However, the foundry crew quickly learned to improvise around the piece, learning the logistics of moving the parts, which numbered more than 500, around in the

confined space. The stop-and-go process with the whale’s funding also proved a challenge as the crew had to work to keep up their other projects at the same time.

“We do a lot of monumental stuff and we just had to work around it,” Parks said.

Wallen also spent a significant amount of time in Enterprise. He spent at least a month when the foundry was working on the clay portion of the project.

“During the enlargement process, they have a lot of



Steve Tool/Chieftain
The whale, minus its flippers, sits at the foundry before being shipped to Alaska,

hands helping them the artist),” Parks said. “He spent a lot of time on that trip doing the eyes, the barnacles — all the stuff that’s important to reproduce.”

The foundry received the original piece, then called a maquette, when it was a mere 26 inches tall or so. That piece was enlarged to an 8-foot piece to see how the fine details grew in proportion. It

now resides at the University of Alaska.

Artists with Wallen’s renown are what gave the foundry its reputation in the art world.

“Our reputation is built on what we do for the artist,” Parks said. “If they’re happy they pass that on. Skip’s been very supportive that way, as have most of our artists. We have a great crew. They’re

seasoned professionals, and they make artists happy, and that what gets you work.”

The logistics of moving the piece to its Alaska home proved challenging as well. The bronze was not shipped in one piece, as even the flippers were 14 feet long. As it was, the foundry ordered a special trailer made just to haul the whale torso to Bellingham, Wash., and on to Seattle, where it was shipped to Alaska.

Wallen completed a zoology and wildlife management degree from the University of Wisconsin before relocating to Alaska to work for the state Fish and Wildlife Department. He’s lived there for more than 50 years now. He said the humpback whale was chosen because it is the most common southeastern Alaskan whale and representative of Alaskan marine life.

A happenstance interaction between Wallen’s wife and the foundry led the sculptor to his choice of Parks Bronze to realize his work.

“I went down there just to take a look, and I’ve been with them for quite a long time,” Wallen said. “It’s a happy place, and you feel good. There’s a terrific expertise of the people at Parks Bronze, and Steve (Parks) is a very competent person with a great sense of humor.”

The foundry now has completed nearly a dozen of Wallen’s pieces.

Several members of the foundry, including Parks, were in Juneau this week to complete the instillation of the whale at its new home on the downtown waterfront.

Restrictions increased as fire danger heats up

Wallowa County Chieftain

The likelihood of a large wildfire occurring has increased over the past several days with the recent hot, dry weather. The indices that fire managers use to measure seasonal fire severity are indicating extreme fire conditions across northeastern Oregon. As a result, fire managers for Oregon Department of Forestry’s Northeast Oregon District are increasing the wildfire prevention measures in their Regulated Use Closure.

Effective Friday, Aug. 19, the Oregon Department of Forestry added additional restrictions to the Regulated Use Closure for lands within the Northeast Oregon District. The Regulated Use Closure affects private, state, county, municipal and tribal lands in seven counties: Union, Baker, Wallowa, Umatilla and small portions of Malheur, Grant and Morrow counties. The Regulated Use Closure is intended to prevent or minimize human-caused wildfires and to protect natural resources and public health and safety.

“These restrictions are put in place to help minimize private landowners’ exposure to human caused fires,” said La Grande Unit Forester Joe Hessel. “While landowners and the public must abide by these prevention measures, landowners can impose more stringent restrictions on their own land. It’s best to check with the landowner or manager of the land before you head out to enjoy the forest.”

So far this year, ODF’s Northeast Oregon District has had 20 human-caused fires that have burned 698 acres. Additionally, there have been 10 lightning-caused fires that have burned 123 acres.

The Regulated Use Closure includes the following fire prevention measures:

- Open fires are prohibited, including campfires, charcoal fires, cooking fires and warming fires, except at designated locations. Designated locations within the Regulated Use Closure area includes, but is not limited to, the following Oregon State Parks: Emigrant Springs, Ukiah Dale, Catherine Creek, Hilgard Junction, Red Bridge, Wallowa Lake, Minam and Unity Lake. Portable cooking stoves using liquefied or bottled fuels are allowed.
- Debris burning is prohibited, including the use of burn barrels.
- Chainsaw use is prohibited except on industrial operations that possess a valid Permit to Operate Power Driven Machinery.
- Smoking is prohibited while traveling, except in vehicles on improved roads, in boats on the water, or at a cleared area.
- Use of motor vehicles, including motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), is prohibited except on improved roads, except in the commercial culture and harvest of agricultural crops.
- Cutting, grinding and welding of metal is prohibited unless specifically waived by the State Forester.
- Mowing of dried and cured grass with power driven equipment is prohibited.
- Any electric fence controller in use shall be: 1) Listed by a nationally recognized testing laboratory or be certified by the Department of Consumer Business Services; and 2) Operated in compliance with manufacturer’s instructions.
- Possession of the following firefighting equipment is required while traveling except on state highways, county roads and driveways: one shovel and one gallon of water or one 2 ½ pound or larger fire extinguisher.

Also prohibited during fire season is the use of exploding targets, tracer ammunition and sky lanterns.

Citizens are asked to continue to use caution and adhere to regulations. The public also is reminded that the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, as well as the BLM, are currently under public-use restrictions. Current fire restrictions for forestlands in Northeast Oregon can be found at www.bmidc.org.

Visit <http://bluemountain-fireinfo.blogspot.com> to check for current fire information in the Blue Mountains.

To report a fire, call Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch at 541-963-7171 or dial 911.

Burn ban in Joseph

There’s a burn ban in effect within Joseph city limits. No open burning or recreational fires are allowed. If you suspect someone is burning during this burn ban, please call the Wallowa County Sheriff’s Department at 541-426-3131.

Wallowa County Chieftain

Oregon State Police officials have concluded their investigation into a 2015 report of missing controlled substances that had been removed from two state crime labs.

Detectives established and documented a pattern of theft by employee Nika Larsen, an OSP scientist who used her

position to remove controlled substances from two of the five OSP crime labs.

The Oregon Attorney General and the U.S. Attorney’s Office also conducted their own investigations, which confirmed OSP’s findings and built a successful criminal case against Larsen.

The theft resulted in thousands of compromised drugs

cases. For example, it was reported in 2015 that Umatilla County had 1,345 cases in which Larsen was involved. Justice officials will have to re-evaluate all of those cases and possibly retry or dismiss them.

Wallowa County District Attorney Mona K. Williams reported last year that the county had been lucky in that evi-

dence in only five cases passed through Larsen’s hands and none of them were drug-related.

OSP has participated in a workgroup established by Gov. Kate Brown to evaluate policies and procedures utilized within its crime labs.

The OSP Forensic Services Division provides Oregon’s only full-service forensic laboratory system.

Investigation of crime lab thefts ends

Wallowa County Chieftain

Jason Huston fired three rounds from a 9 mm Glock pistol Thursday into his lifelong friend Ken Valdez at his Hermiston home, killing him. Huston also shot Andria Bye once and, in the end, shot and killed himself.

Bye was taken to the hospital after telling police what had transpired, though she didn’t know the whereabouts of her son, 14-year-old James “JJ” Hurtado.

Perhaps no more than an hour before, Huston is believed to have shot and killed Hurtado, to whom he was something of a father figure, with the same pistol.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston and Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan revealed more on Monday about one of the most violent crimes in Hermiston’s history.

Huston and Valdez, both 45, had known each other as far back as high school and had coached wrestling together since 2013, and Huston and Bye had previously been in a relationship. Edmiston held off discussing a motive, calling it



E.J. Harris/East Oregonian
Police investigate the scene of a shooting that left two dead and one injured at the corner of Northwest 11th Street and West Madrona Avenue on Thursday in Hermiston.

premature while the investigation continues.

Hurtado had last been seen Thursday at 10 a.m. when Huston picked him up in Umatilla and said they were going to play disc golf at McNary Park, according to Edmiston.

Police around 11:18 a.m. responded to calls about a shooting at Southwest 11th Street and Hermiston Avenue. They found the door open at Valdez’s home at 130 N.W. 11th St., and inside found Bye and the bodies of Valdez and Huston.

Edmiston said Bye gave a detailed statement to police, but Huston had not told her he shot her son. Bye was released from

the hospital over the weekend.

Detectives at a debriefing talked about their search for Hurtado that began soon after they arrived at Valdez’s home, Edmiston said, and also came up with a “to do” list, including

more places to check for the teen. They soon learned of two places Huston was known to go shooting recreationally.

“When we got that, it was starting to get dark,” Edmiston said, “so we had to hurry.”

Detectives went to both sites, he said, and found the boy’s body off Country Lane about two miles outside the Hermiston city limits.

Police found a pickup that belonged to Huston on Bridge Road, which is near Country Lane, but Edmiston said Huston drove another pickup into town and parked it at Foxwood Apartments near Valdez’s home.

Valdez had a roommate, Edmiston said, but that person was at work during the shooting.

Come join us to celebrate
Dana and Everett Roberts’
Retirement!

Join us for coffee and cake to
celebrate 20+ years with
Wallowa County

August 31st, 2016 at 3:00 PM
at the Thornton Conference Room
in the County Courthouse

Enterprise School District #21

- School Meals will start Monday, August 29, 2016 -

Prices

Breakfast:

Grades K-6 \$2.60 • Grades 7-12 \$2.80
Grades K-12 (Reduced) \$0 • Adults \$3.35
Milk (A la Carte) \$.50

Lunch:

Grades K-6 \$2.60 • Grades 7-12 \$2.80
Reduced K-12 \$0 • Adults \$3.35
Milk (A la Carte or with cold lunches) \$.50

New Free & Reduced applications are required for each school year.

Use one Free & Reduced Price School Meal application for all students in your household.

Free & Reduced lunch applications are available at the following locations:
Enterprise Elementary School Office
Enterprise High School Office

If you need any assistance or have any questions, please call Sandy at 426-3812 after August 23, 2016

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