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OPINION

WEDNESDAY

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125TH ANNIVERSARY FLASHBACK

1890 | THE WEST ❖ FLORENCE TIMES ❖ THE SIUSLAW OAR ❖ THE SIUSLAW NEWS ❖ SIUSLAW NEWS | 2015

This year marks Siuslaw News' quasiquintennial, our 125th anniversary, a remarkable achievement for any business in a small community like Florence. To commemorate this milestone, throughout the year we'll feature some of the town's history as originally published in the newspaper, including historic articles and photos from more than a century ago.

Siuslaw searches for native rhododendrons

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The Siuslaw Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is searching for the rhododendron native to the Oregon coast.

These beautiful rhododendrons, officially known as *R. macrophyllum*, grow abundantly along the coast and give Florence the nickname, "The City of Rhododendrons."

Some of the best habitat of this wonderful species is rapidly being destroyed, and some of the better forms of the plant are being lost forever as the area expands with more homes, businesses and roads, according to Everett

Hall, chapter president.

"Development encompasses land where *R. macrophyllum* grows naturally," Hall said, "and the Siuslaw Chapter wants to locate these plants, collect their seeds or take cuttings, and plant the seedlings in local parks and public places."

With the help of the public, the chapter has identified more than 40 outstanding plants from Bandon in Southern Oregon to Newport in the north.

"We discovered one of the whitest whites and one of the reddest reds I have ever seen," said Gene Cockeram, project chairman. "Everyone traveling along the Oregon coast is

asked to help with the search for superior *R. macrophyllum*. Each plant that is successfully propagated will be given a name. If it is one you find, you will have the opportunity to name it."

A superior rhododendron should have large foliage and a truss composed of at least 20 flowers in the pink form.

The chapter would like to look at every white form and light red form that is found, regardless of how many flowers are in the truss.

Along the coast, most of these plants bloom in April and some still bloom in July.

The chapter is interested in these early and

late bloomers, too.

Even though the Florence area is the center of the search, the collecting area will be the Oregon coast from Lincoln City to Brookings.

The chapter requests that every rhododendron lover help save the native flower. It is an extensive project for the Siuslaw Chapter to undertake and it will take several years to accomplish.

The project was initiated in 2002 and it is the goal of the chapter to have the project completed by 2007, the 100th anniversary of "The City of Rhododendrons" festival, although newly discovered *R. macrophyllum* can always be added to the list. ❖

NEIGHBORS



Ghosts of Florence past

BOB JACKSON
NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENT
For the Siuslaw News

A heavy dose of disclaimers is necessary, because we are delving into a subjective realm that is both whimsical and apocryphal. And there surely will be misspelled names.

The tale of a ghostly apparition inhabiting the Heceta Head Lighthouse keeper's house is well known. This goes back a few years, and as close as I can remember, it seems that Jim Alexander, a Florence handyman, carpenter and painter, was on a ladder repairing a window in the old building when a wispy, ethereal, nearly transparent figure of a young woman all dressed in white appeared

for a fleeting moment inside the building. He was so startled that he dropped his hammer and quit work for the rest of the day.

As Robert Ripley would have said in his long-ago syndicated strip, "Believe it or not!"

Whether the "dearly departed" luminaries and ordinary folk from other times still linger amongst us is — and always will be — rife with speculation. Being sort of a daydreamer and "spook," I recall that when we visited Washington, D.C., I could not shake the feeling that historic figures from the past were hovering near all the hallowed memorials that surrounded us wherever we went. And, there was the U.S.S. Arizona

memorial experience. I stood before the wall inscribed with the names of the sailors still entombed down in the old battleship's hull and then suddenly, without any warning, I could hear in my head the anguished cries of all those boys, frozen in their youth for all eternity. I ran outside, back into the bright sunlight with tears forming in my eyes and running down my cheeks.

Over the years, many generations of Florence residents have come and gone, even back to a time when the streets consisted of rough planks that rattled and squeaked from the passing wagons, and of tall sailing ships loaded with lumber, waiting for the next tide.

Our most recent generation is mostly gone now. Is Bill Karnowsky's spirit aware that a coffee shop occupies what used to be Bill's Auto and Evinrude outboard

dealership? How about Werner Pinkney, the World War II P-38 fighter pilot; is he doing slow rolls over his beloved Sportsman store, where he sold Mercury outboards, hunting rifles and fishing gear?

The ghosts are everywhere. Gordon Andreason: I remember the leather leggings and the black greasy cap. He ran the Front Street garage and repair, which also had a wrecker/tow truck service. I have been told, his wife Molly loaned out books from a small building. I believe this may have been before a public library even existed in Florence.

Gone is Hans Peterson and his Chevrolet dealership, along with all his boys. There was Ed Johnston; his Johnston Ford dealership still exists. There was druggist Dick Carrol ("Pills for ills, more pills for ills"). Walt Brynd smoked a curved stem meerschaum pipe that always rested

on his chin. Walt owned the Shell station on 101 and his wife Eleanor owned the Oceanaire restaurant next door. And of course, the prolific oil painter, reputed to have once crewed on sailing ships, he signed his name Osterhoff on all his beautifully realistic seagoing paintings that once hung in every Florence restaurant.

Although we reject any thought that any of these souls of departed generations may occasionally be hovering around, it could also be comforting to entertain the possibility of a permanent spiritual existence.

And so, as attested by their fierce defense of ancient burial grounds, it seems the indigenous Native American Indians are more closely attuned to a belief in a spiritual existence than the supposedly "enlightened" Europeans whose inflexible views refuse to consider any unusual, unproven supernatural occurrence.

LETTERS

Celebrate laboratory professionals

Medical laboratory teams are the cornerstone of accurate diagnoses for patients. In fact, test results comprise approximately 70 percent of a patient's medical record today. Whether it's a routine health screen, cancer diagnosis or blood donation, medical laboratory professionals care for patients in small communities and metropolitan areas across the nation.

April 19 through 25 is National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week. The week is dedicated to celebrate the life-saving contributions of more than 300,000 medical laboratory professionals.

We care for patients every day, performing and interpreting tests that save lives and keep people healthy. Laboratory test results drive a significant portion of clinical decisions, from diagnosis to therapy, with the ultimate goal of providing excellent patient care. Using state-of-the-art technology and instrumentation, laboratory professionals perform and supervise tests that lead to the detection of potential health problems; the sooner a disease is caught, the better the outcome. Also, laboratory professionals are part of the team to guide and assess patients' ongoing treatment and care.

One way that Americans can celebrate this week is to renew their commitment to good health and schedule a health screening test or blood donation. As a pathologist, the physician leading



laboratory medicine, I know that these simple and often routine tests and procedures save lives.

PeaceHealth Laboratories celebrates our 900 laboratory professionals in three states who perform more than 6 million tests annually and play a vital role in patient care.

Terry A. Welch
PeaceHealth Laboratories
Florence

Vote for Nancy

Ballots will soon be in the mail for us to elect two Port of Siuslaw commissioners. The Port of Siuslaw was established in 1909 and includes the entire geographic region of the Siuslaw River and its watershed, reaching eastward almost to Cottage Grove. Over the years, the port has been stewarded by many fine commissioners, including most recently Nancy Rickard.

Nancy has lived in Florence with her family for over 30 years. She served on the school board for 14 of those years. Through her church, she devotes much of her time striving to make better the lives of local people especially in need of help. She knows the community. She cares.

Equally important, she is conscientious. She is accustomed to hard work. Elected a port commissioner in 2013, she acquired rapidly a clear understanding of what a port commissioner's duties entail. She visits Mapleton regularly to learn from the Siuslaw Watershed Council. She has represented the port at coastal events in other counties.

You can trust Nancy to make wise decisions that will benefit the public of the entire Siuslaw watershed, both in the short term and for generations to come. Please cast your vote to re-elect Nancy Rickard as Port of Siuslaw commissioner.

Karin Radtke
Chairwoman, Florence Area Democratic Club

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