SIUSLAW NEWS SN 1890 2020 CELEBRATING 130 YEARS
News and views that define our community

Community & Lifestyle

Time Out

By Lloyd Little
Retired teacher, coach and game official

With more than55 years as an athlete, coach, parent and spectator, Lloyd Little has gained some insights and perspectives regarding athletics. Each week, he shares what he's learned about sports from his multiple points of view.

Before the HOF
(Part II)

The Coach

For three decades, Coach Len Lutero was in charge of the Siuslaw High School Viking football program. The gym walls are painted with many league titles in those years. His is also the first state football title on those same gym walls.

Coach Lutero was an old-school football coach; he believed if you practiced long enough and hard enough, you would be victorious. There are literally hundreds of Viking alumni football players that will attest to this philosophy. Coach Jim Webber, a Viking HOF member, told stories of the Viking practices to me during our shared days at Pacific University.

It wasn't until I personally experienced a Siuslaw Vikings practice that I began to believe his stories. As the 1977 season progressed, my first as an assistant Viking coach, the words of Coach Webber materialized before my eyes; the Vikings practiced every phase of football.

Every day.

Coach Lutero left nothing to

See LITTLE 3B

Tide Tables

Entrance Siuslaw River

	High Tide	Low Tide
May 16	8:20am / 5.2 9:26pm / 6.1	2:54am / 2.5 2:50pm / 1.1
May 17	9:27am / 5.2 10:02pm / 6.4	3:49am / 1.9 3:38pm / 1.3
May 18	10:25am / 5.3 10:34pm / 6.7	4:35am / 1.3 4:21pm / 1.5
May 19	11:15am / 5.5 11:05pm / 6.9	5:14am / 0.7 4:59pm / 1.8
May 20	12:00pm / 5.7 11:34pm/ 7.2	5:50am/ 0.2 5:35pm/ 2.0
May 21	12:43pm / 5.8	6:25am / -0.3 6:10pm / 2.3
May 22	7:00am / -0.7 6:45pm/ 2.5	12:04am/ 7.3 1:24pm/ 5.9

MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Mike Bones, co-owner of Bones' Nursery north of Florence, is a long-time Rhododendron grower and enthusiast.

Rhody King of Florence

Mike Bones credits his love for rhododendrons with making friends around the world.

By Mark Brennan
Siuslaw News

This weekend, the spirit of a century-old Florence tradition will continue, albeit under the restrictions necessitated by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Though the 113th annual "Rhododendron Festival Grand Floral Parade" has been cancelled for the first time since WWII, a "virtual" parade will take place as part of maintaining an annual celebration centered around the area's most notable flower: The Rhododendron.

There are thousands of Rhodies growing around town and the variety of colors and blossoms of the plant, which is actually classified as a "shrub," make for spectacular viewing at even the most common of locations.

While there will be no organized celebration of the Rhody this year, there is a year-long appreciation of the plant which centers around local agronomy group the Siuslaw Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

Fortunately for residents of the area there is an individual, Mike Bones, who has been involved with the group for decades and during that time has become one of the leading experts in the world on the plant. Bones is widely recognized as an expert in the field and has shared his knowledge with residents for years.

"The Genus Rhododendron has been my passion since I could crawl out my parents' front door and sit among them," says Bones. "As a young boy growing up here in Florence, I would climb in the jungle of wild rhododendrons with the goal to see who could go the farthest without touching the ground."

When he was 14, Bones began working for Agnes McCornack, who had a rhododendron nursery up the north fork of the Siuslaw River. McCornack was a Rhododendron Princess in the early 1900s and the person who introduced Bones to hybrid rhododendrons.

"That was 58 years ago, and I am still learning about them," Bones says.

The visual attraction of the Rhody is often what first draws people to the plant, but there is also the historic and cultural impact the shrub has made around the world for millennia that interests many. Ancient cultures in China, Tibet and India revere the plant, with vast stands of the plant spread across those countries.

"There are over 1,000 known species in the world and unlimited number of hybrids.

Plant explorers are still finding new types and — yes, I try to get my hands on those newly found species along with the new hybrids that the growers are producing," says Bones, who was able to travel to Sikkim, India in 1985 to see the majestic 100-foot-tall tree rhododendrons. "In Sikkim, the people used Rhododendrons as firewood, building material and they even make a nice moonshine out of the petals of R. arboretum," says Bones. "It's really pretty tasty up at the 14,000-foot elevation, but totally disgusting here at sea level."

While Bones has literally traveled around the world in search of information and networking opportunities related to the rhododendron, he has found that Oregon is as well suited for the plant as anywhere he has been in his extensive travels.

"Our area around Florence is rhododendron paradise," he says. "The mild climate is what most rhododendrons need, along with acidic soil, plenty of rain, sun — but not the burning sun. Working with the plants, one gets to know each plant's own plants growing habit."

Bones and his wife, Kathy, own a nursery and have been growing different varieties of the plant for decades. During that time, the accomplished agronomist has developed a number of unique and unusual rhododendrons — some which have won awards for color, shape and size.

He suggests that gardeners spend some time familiarizing themselves with the different varieties of rhodies and the location where they will be planted before purchasing an individual plant.

"Working with the plants, one gets to know each plant's growing habit," he says, comparing rhododendrons to people. "Some are tall and slender, others wider

See KING 2B

Blast from Rhody Days Past: 1910's third-annual Rhody Festival

By Mary Nulty
Head Historian, Keeper's House Interpretive Center
&
Sharone Waite
Siuslaw Pioneer Museum

Step back in time into the year of 1910, into the lives of Heceta Head's lightkeepers and the third-annual Rhododendron Festival. One of the duties of lighthouse keepers was to write daily in the logbook.

The original Heceta Logbooks are stored at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. They answer some of the questions we have regarding life at Heceta Lightstation.

The Hansen's spent almost 20 years at Heceta Head as lightkeepers. The logbook entry for May 24, 1910 tells us that the head keeper Olaf Hansen, left the station at 8 a.m. to attend the third-annual Florence Rhododendron Festival in Florence.

COURTESY SIUSLAW PIONEER MUSEUM

Heceta Lighthouse Head Keeper, Olaf Hansen, and his family in 1910: (back row) Adell Hansen age 3, Mildred Hansen age 5; (center row) Irene Hansen age 7, Head Keeper Olaf Hansen, Gertrude Hansen age 6; (front row) Leona Dietz age 5, Howard Hansen age 10, Thelma Hansen age 9; (standing) Florence Martin Dietz (Annie's Sister) and Annie Martin Hansen

The two assistant keepers were left in charge of Heceta. The entry for May 27 says that Hansen returned to station at 4 p.m.

Can you imagine traveling with eight children from age three to 10 for hours in a horse drawn wagon — from Heceta Lightstation to Florence — in 1910?

They followed the wagon road that was originally a trail, used by the local Siuslaw Indians and their ancestors, south over the headlands. The wagon road led them down to the ocean beach where they traveled on the hard-packed wet sand at low tide.

Then it was back on the rough, and often muddy, wagon road into Florence.

Eugene people who had left for Florence early in the morning, arrived at Mapleton having made the trip in about six hours. They were met at Mapleton by boats and brought to Florence that evening.

Where did the Hansen family spend the nights of May 24, 25, and 26 of 1910 while attending the Rhododendron Festival?

See PAST 2B