



Offbeat Oregon History

The ship that suddenly broke in half while moored at the dock

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

The S.S. Schenectady was a very big deal for Oregon, back when it was first launched on New Year's Eve in 1942.

It was a war year, of course, and it hadn't been such a swell year for the United States. American forces were hard-pressed on every side, and although the Battle of Midway had given a ray of hope in the Pacific, the Nazis were looking just as dangerous as ever.

But in Portland, Henry Kaiser's Liberty Ship-building wonder-plant was just getting up to speed, and any home-front Oregonian watching the operation had to feel a thrill of pride, a feeling that Hitler and Tojo couldn't possibly sink 'em as fast as we were building 'em.

And the Schenectady represented another leap forward for Oregon ship-building. It was an oil tanker, an essential sort of ship for a war that was almost totally motorized. It was the biggest ship ever built on the West Coast, and it was followed in a matter of weeks by another just like it — and another, and another. In fact, the Schenectady was the first ship off a brand-new Henry Kaiser assembly-line shipyard on Swan Island, just like the assembly-line shipyards that were already cranking out thousands of Liberty Ships, only set up to build a bigger model. The shipyard manager expected that by early summer, the Swan Island assembly line would be producing one new Schenectady-class tanker every four and a half days.

The Schenectady-class tankers were 523 feet long and 68 feet wide (Liberty Ships were 441 by 57). A 6,000-horsepower steam-electric drive system propelled it at 15 knots, or 28 miles per hour — a very respectable speed, and a real lifesaver in an environment where most German U-boats topped out at 17 knots. It cost \$2.7 million to build, and it took almost twice as much steel to build as did a Liberty Ship.

More than one spectator, watching this 16,000-ton behemoth being launched and knowing another would be joining it in just a few days, surely felt reassured that 1943 would be a much better year.

Then came the night of Jan. 16.

The Schenectady had just finished her sea trials, and everything had gone smoothly and satisfactorily. Now, moored at the fitting dock at Swan Island, she was being prepared to go into service, carrying fuel to the nation's war machines, 7.5 million gallons at a time.

It was 11 p.m. on a cold night — in the low 20s or possibly lower; cold enough that Portlanders in the southeast quarter of the city were actually ice-skating on Laurelhurst Lake. The

water in the river was right around 40 degrees. And although these temperatures aren't exactly extreme by arctic-sea standards, investigators later fingered them as the decisive factor in what happened next.

With a cracking crash that one bystander said actually shook the ground, the huge ship simply cracked in half. The bow and stern dropped down into the water, jackknifing into the muddy bottom of the lagoon; the midline of the ship was thrust up high above the water; and the 30 crew members, who had been preparing the big ship to cast off and head out to sea, surely thought they were about to die.

Luckily, the water beneath the dock was shallow — barely deep enough to float the ship, which drew up to 30 feet depending on its load. The crew members were easily able to get up on deck — where the third mate supplied the only injury when, in a panic, he leaped down onto the dock and hurt his ankle.

And now, of course, the shipyard and military officials had a whale of a public-relations problem on their hands. Had such an embarrassing failure occurred someplace discreet, it could have been kept quiet; but this ship was in the middle of Oregon's biggest city, bent like a piece of kindling cracked over a woodsman's knee, a three-foot-wide crack on display for all to see.

The new employees at Kaiser's new shipyard tried to keep their chins up, but it wasn't easy. As a morale-booster, having one's very first ship break in half a propos of nothing while innocuously tied to the pier leaves something to be desired.

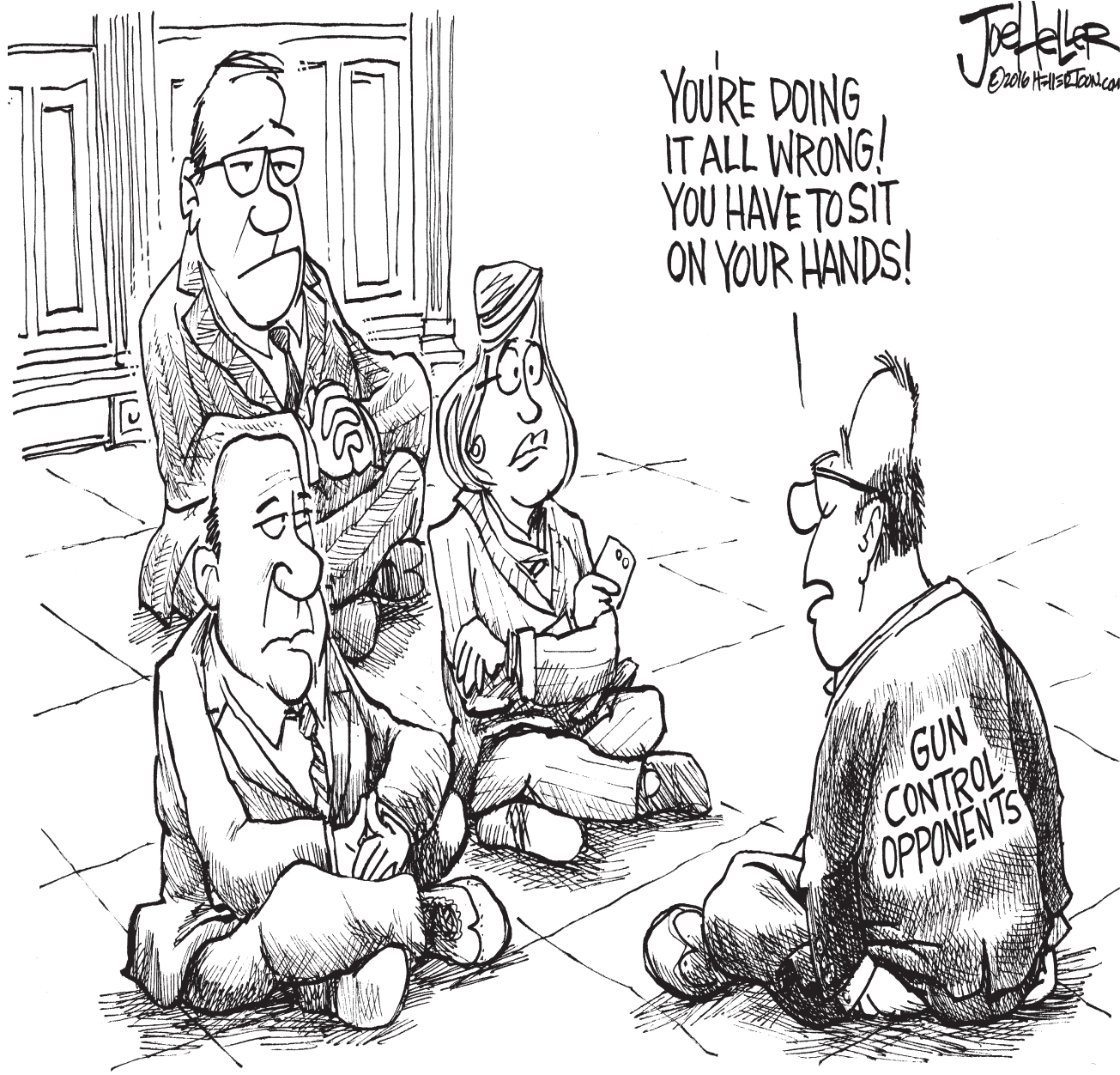
Thoughts turned immediately to sabotage. Could this have been a deliberate act? It was hard to imagine that any saboteur could have engineered this kind of a break, but if one had, he or she would surely have earned a gold star for this job.

The F.B.I. moved with lightning speed to quell that rumor. The very next day, the bureau released a statement denying that sabotage was involved. Then Rear Admiral Howard L. Vickery arrived to lead the investigation.

The results were rather unsettling. Faulty welding was the first suspicion on everyone's mind — remember, this was the first ship off a brand-new assembly line, so everyone working on it was new on the job, and many of the welders working on the Schenectady had never welded anything before the war broke out. And, frankly, faulty welding was what most people were hoping the trouble was. After all, that was a problem that could be easily fixed with more training and supervision of the welders.

But a careful inspection of the hull didn't reveal any welds that might

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Fireworks — Keep it legal, keep it safe

The Office of State Fire Marshal, Oregon fire service, Keep Oregon Green, natural resource agencies, Oregon fireworks wholesalers and safety experts encourage Oregonians to “Keep it Legal and Keep it Safe” when using fireworks. The 2016 Oregon fireworks sales season opened Thursday, June 23 and runs through Wednesday, July 6. The OSFM and their partners want everyone to know what fireworks are legal in Oregon, where they are permitted, and the important steps to take for fireworks safety.

“People often forget that legal fireworks can only be purchased from Oregon permitted fireworks retailers and stands,” says Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple. “And, regulations limit where those fireworks may be used. For example, fireworks are prohibited on all Oregon beaches, in parks and campgrounds.”

July 4 holiday forest visitors are advised to leave all fireworks at home. The use of fireworks is prohibited on all national forestland, and most other

public lands. “Fireworks compound the threat to already dry forests,” states Keep Oregon Green President Kristin Babbs. “Enjoy fireworks where they belong: on the pavement—safely away from houses, vehicles and flammable vegetation.”

Oregon law bans possession, use, or sale of fireworks that fly, explode, or travel more than six feet on the ground or 12 inches into the air. Fireworks commonly called bottle rockets, Roman Candles and firecrackers are IL-LEGAL in Oregon.

There were 227 reported fireworks-related fires in Oregon during 2015, resulting in 28 injuries and more than \$423,000 in property damage. Over the past five years, from 2011 through 2015, there were 924 reported fireworks-related fires in Oregon resulting in one death, 161 civilian injuries, and more than \$2.7 million in property damage.

Officials may seize illegal fireworks and fine offenders up to \$500 per violation. Those who misuse fireworks or allow fireworks to cause damage are

liable and may be required to pay fire suppression costs or other damage. Parents are also liable for fireworks damage caused by their children.

“All Oregonians share the responsibility to use only legal fireworks and use them carefully,” adds Ruiz-Temple. And we encourage you to be aware and considerate of neighbors and their pets, before deciding on when and where you choose to light fireworks.”

The OSFM encourages everyone to use the four B's of safe fireworks use:

Be Prepared before lighting fireworks: keep water available by using a garden hose or bucket.

Be Safe when lighting fireworks: keep children and pets away from fireworks.

Be Responsible after lighting fireworks: never relight a dud. Wait 15 to 20 minutes then soak it in a bucket of water before disposal.

Be Aware: use only legal fireworks and use them only in legal places.

Which is better for my health, a green juice or a green smoothie?

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

Vegetable juices and green smoothies (also called blended salads) both have a place in the Nutritarian diet. Both are great ways to get more raw leafy greens into your diet,

in addition to your usual salads.

A green smoothie — a blended mix of leafy greens, fruits and



nuts and/or seeds — is an excellent, portable morning meal. It contains all the fiber from the greens and fruit, plus fat from the nuts or seeds to keep you full and limit the rise in glucose from the fruit.

A vegetable juice with a small amount of fruit, depending on size, may be as calorie-dense as the smoothie but will not be a satisfying meal on its own. For this reason, if you have a substantial amount of weight to lose, I wouldn't recommend juicing often because it will likely add too many extra calories (without the feeling of satiety) and compromise your weight loss efforts. Also for those with diabetes, I do not recommend juicing, since the sugar in the juice enters the bloodstream rapidly without fiber from the original vegetables and fruits to slow the process.

Blending and juicing both disrupt the mechanical structure of plant cells, which increases the

accessibility of many micronutrients. Many beneficial micronutrients — carotenoids, polyphenols and folate, for example — are often bound to structural components or large molecules within the plant cell like fiber, proteins and starches. Processing, heating and chewing break down these cellular structures to increase the availability of the bound micronutrients; however, many may not be accessible for our absorption by chewing alone. Blending increases our likelihood of absorbing these nutrients. Importantly, the micronutrients that are bound to fiber within the plant cell may be removed with the fiber by juicing and therefore be more available via blending than juicing.

Also, with smoothies, you are often adding nuts or seeds as a healthful fat source. Although blending alone increases the accessibility of carotenoids, since the presence of fats is known to increase carotenoid absorption

from leafy greens, it is possible that nuts and seeds in a smoothie could increase absorption further.

For those who have nutrient absorption problems, gastrointestinal conditions, or other medical conditions, vegetable juices (especially cruciferous vegetables) are often useful as a supplement to a healthful diet, providing additional beneficial nutrients to promote healing.

Guidelines for juicing and blending:

By blending, you get everything that you would get in juice, so juicing is not a necessary component of a healthful diet.

Whereas a green smoothie can be a meal, think of a vegetable juice as a supplement to add extra veggie-derived nutrients to a healthful diet.

If you do juice regularly, make sure that you are not replacing your leafy green salads and whole raw vegetables with

juices. Whether you are juicing or making smoothies, be sure to put a greater focus on vegetables than fruit; use only a small amount of fruit to add flavor, so that you maximize nutritional value and limit glycemic effects.

Limit smoothies and green juices to one per day, and remember that this does not remove the necessity to utilize your teeth to eat a raw salad every day.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. Visit his informative website at DrFuhrman.com. Submit your questions and comments about this column directly to news-questions@drfuhrman.com. The full reference list for this article can be found at DrFuhrman.com.

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e-Edition year..... \$36.00

Rates in all other areas of United States: Ten Weeks \$11.70; one year, \$46.35, e-Edition \$43.00.

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Periodicals postage paid at Cottage Grove, Oregon.

Postmaster: Send address changes to P.O. Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.

Local Mail Service:

If you don't receive your Cottage Grove Sentinel on the Wednesday of publication, please let us know. Call 942-3325 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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