

Take time to reflect before plunging into a new year

Being the news junkie that I am, at the beginning of every January, I can't help but wonder what the biggest news stories of the upcoming year will be.

Unfortunately, most all of the national and international stories topping the list at year's end are bad news: natural disasters, wars, serial murders, plane crashes and celebrities gone awry.

Even in our own region, the top stories in Cannon Beach and Seaside were bad news.

In Cannon Beach, taking top spot was the murder of a 2-year-old girl and the attempted murder of her 13-year-old sister, allegedly by their mother.

Two forest fires in Arch Cape; sea star wasting disease at Haystack Rock; the pursuit and denial of a charter for the Cannon Beach Academy; and the deaths of some

too.

- The South County Community Food Bank successfully found a new location; a celebration and open house will occur soon. This was a story about the cooperation between the Seaside School District, which gave away two portable buildings from the former Cannon Beach Elementary School; the city of Cannon Beach; and the Seaside pantry officials to create a permanent location for the pantry.

- A few months later, the Cannon Beach Food Pantry found itself in the same position: It had to move from its present location. Once again, the school district and Cannon Beach officials helped out, and the Cannon Beach pantry is busy remodeling another portable building at the former school site and will move in soon.

- While the retirement and depar-

IMPRESSIONS

By
NANCY McCARTHY



We reflect on the past year, take a deep breath and plunge into the next year, ready to explore what comes next

But there are stories that resonate personally with me that wouldn't necessarily make the Top 10 list or any list for that matter:

- The invasion of elk in Gearhart and Seaside. Photos emailed to me by business owner Jeff Ter Har; nature photographer Neal Maine; and, especially, Gearhart administrative assistant and treasurer Gail Como generated more than 30,000 hits from all over the world on the Seaside Signal Facebook page.

- Cash, the would-be K-9 officer in Cannon Beach, got fired. It was a small story that captured the interest and imagination of news outlets across the country.

- The tussle over ownership of the south half of the Cannon Beach Elementary School property. The school district owns it, and the Cannon Beach City Council wants to buy it, but not for the \$1.2 million the district is requesting. There was a flurry of words from the school district chairman and the Cannon Beach mayor, then (apparent) silence.

- It wouldn't make anyone's list of top news stories, but when Cannon Beach reporter Erick Bengel decided to accompany City Planner Mark Barnes on a bicycle ride from Seaside to Cannon Beach, I also had to take the trip — by car — to take photos. I didn't know whether to laugh at Erick's attempts to climb the Cannon Beach hill or worry that the 25-pound backpack he was carrying would finish him off.

Then there are experiences that

aren't stories but are pretty memorable for me, anyway:

- My first visit to the Seaside Jazz Festival allowed me to listen to wonderful music and watch dancers get into the "beat."

- I appreciated the sense of peace and true connection felt throughout the room during the "Welcome Home Salmon" celebration in Cannon Beach.

- There was the thrill when the Seaside Signal staff was awarded the Seaside Chamber of Commerce's "Business of the Year" award.

- I very much enjoyed the enthusiastic performance of "Grease" put on by Seaside High School students last spring. There are truly talented youth — and instructors — on the North Coast.

- It was fun to be part of the camaraderie among friends at the Seaside Downtown Development Association and Seaside Chamber

of Commerce morning breakfasts throughout the year. If you want to know what's going on in the South County, that's where to go.

Every day we are on the lookout for news, seeking stories that intrigue, entertain, inform and inspire. Then there are the stories that take us by surprise, that overwhelm us, disappoint, alarm and bring us to despair.

Sometimes we become so inundated with the news and with deadlines that we don't have time to pause and take a look back. I guess that's what the turn of the calendar page on Dec. 31 enables us to do.

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Nancy McCarthy covers South County for The Daily Astorian and is the editor of the Cannon Beach Gazette and the Seaside Signal.



JEFF TER HAR PHOTO

Looking to make a goal, an elk herd spends time munching the grass near the goal post at Seaside High School Jan. 31.



CONTRIBUTED BY DIDRE FEINAUER

Seaside High School's spring musical, "Grease," drew a standing-room-only crowd. Members of the cast are pictured.



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

Cash, the would-be K-9 officer.

well-known residents, including Cannon Beach Book Co. owner Val Ryan, also were among those stories on the list.

In Seaside, the recent death of another 2-year-old girl and an accident last spring when a family nearly drowned after their car went off a boat ramp and into the Necanicum River headed the "top story" list.

Other stories include an effort to recall Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop, a controversial adolescent sexuality conference and the inundation of anchovies onto the banks of the Necanicum River.

But there were happier stories,

ture of former Seaside Police Chief Bob Gross was a sad occasion for many, the city made an easy transition by promoting Seaside police Lt. Dave Ham, who has been with the department since 1995.

- The city of Seaside is anticipating other changes in the future, with a 20-year "visioning" campaign completed and the purchase of a former church building that could become another event space.

- Cannon Beach's Sandcastle Contest celebrated its 50th anniversary. Or was it the 50th? There may be more to this story in 2015....

Uncorked Ramblings STEVEN SINKLER

Puffin Wines bring home platinum and gold medals

Most of you know by now that in addition to owning The Wine Shack, Maryann and I also own Puffin Wines. When we bought them both from Dean Reiman in 2012, we gave him our sincere promise to take good care of Puffin Wines and do our best to grow the wine brand he created.

Recently, we were invited to submit two of our Puffin Wines — our 2013 pinot gris and our 2010 pinot noir — to the Platinum Wine Judging competition held in Kennewick, Wash.

It's truly an honor to participate in this particular competition. Here's why: With most wine competitions, you decide whether your wine is a participant by paying an entry fee, sending your wine in and crossing your fingers. However, to get into the Platinum Wine Judging, your wine must be invited. And to be invited, the wine must have won a

gold medal at a competition in Oregon, Washington, Idaho or British Columbia during the year.

From this initial list, the judges then select the wines they invite to compete. We were elated to receive an invitation!

As I packed up the wines for the event, I put each precious bottle into the shipping box and wished them good luck. I know that it's kinda weird to talk to bottles of wine, but I tend to do this more often than you'd think. Fortunately, they haven't talked back to me yet.

Over 500 of the finest wines from the Pacific Northwest were tasted and evaluated by a panel of nine highly experienced judges. Based on their evaluation, the judges could award a wine with one of three designations: a platinum medal, a gold medal or no medal.

Additionally, when all of the judges gave the wine a



STEVEN SINKLER

platinum medal, the wine received a "double platinum" award. Likewise, a "double gold" medal would also be awarded if all the judges gave a gold medal to a wine.

As Christmas drew near, I began to anticipate the announcement of the results. The competition is stiff, and the judges are exceptional. I think the Puffin Wines are excellent, but how would they stand up against the finest wines throughout the entire Pacific Northwest? Let's just say that I was a little nervous

when I finally received the email with the Platinum Wine Judging results.

I furiously read the email. There it was: Puffin Pinot Gris won a platinum medal! I jumped up and hollered to Maryann, "Pinot gris won a platinum!" We were overjoyed at the result.

How big of a deal is this? Puffin was one of only two pinot gris wines to be awarded a platinum medal. I quickly sent off an email to winemaker Ray Walsh, congratulating him for making such a delicious wine.

But wait, what about Puffin Pinot Noir? In all of the excitement about Puffin Pinot Gris winning a platinum medal, I had forgotten that our 2010 Puffin Pinot Noir was also in the competition. I was immediately disappointed that it hadn't won a platinum medal, but I went back to the results.

There it was: Puffin Pinot Noir was the first wine listed

in the double gold medal section. Yes!

Again, I shouted out the results to Maryann; we are so proud of our pinot noir as well. Double gold. I sent another congratulatory email, this time to winemaker Sean Driggers, and thanked him for a job well done.

Two wines submitted, two medals won. We couldn't have asked for a better outcome. Those two wines that I wished good luck represented themselves and the entire flock of Puffin wines like the rock stars they are.

Puffin is already our top seller at The Wine Shack, but since the results were released two weeks ago, these wines have flown off the shelves with even greater velocity. In fact, we are now sold out of the 2010 Puffin Pinot Noir; however we have plenty of the 2012 Puffin Pinot Noir, and it's even more delicious than the double gold medal win-

ner. We still have some of the platinum-winning 2013 Puffin Pinot Gris on hand, but it, too, is in very short supply now — partially because Maryann pulled three cases aside to pour at our daughter's wedding next month, and I don't think I can get it back from her. The good news, though, is that the 2014 Puffin Pinot Gris will be available in about 45 days.

If you haven't tried a Puffin wine, you really should. The results speak for themselves. Oh, and I think we've kept our promise to Dean.

Don't forget that we are still donating a portion of the proceeds of Puffin wine to the Friends of Haystack Rock to support the great work they do on the beach.

Please remember to drink responsibly.

Steven and Maryann Sinkler own The Wine Shack in Cannon Beach. His column appears every month.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Angels in heaven

To the editor,
They say our children are the future; I look at them as God's angels. Children are the bright spot in the world, but recently two of those bright spots went out.

Two little angels were taken away in an unspeakable manner and will never have all the chances and happiness they deserve. Children look to parents to keep them safe, guide them and most of all love them always. Children should always be made to feel they are the most important gift and never feel pain, neglect

or be afraid. Kids shouldn't have to be put through any type of abuse. After all, they are just kids.

God took two little angels home and will be their protector when they were too young to protect themselves.

Give your little angels all the love and protect them from all the bad. Please don't let another angel be taken away.

**Jenny McCollister
Seaside**

Public 'pout'

To the editor,
Gearhart is very fortunate to have a mayor and a council

that will defend the laws of the community as they have been put in place by generations of caring citizens.

Now one man and his clique are mounting an extended and expensive campaign to override some of these laws and allow them to do what no other citizens would be allowed to do. This effort can only be recognized and treated as an extended public "pout."

Dianne Widdop, his target, is a public treasure — she's honest, fair, open-minded and kind as anyone who knows her is happy to verify. Count your blessings that she is defending Gearhart!

**Sally Mannex
Gearhart**

OBITUARIES



Dennis Michael 'Mike' O'Brien

Feb. 9, 1935 — Dec. 25, 2014



Dennis Michael "Mike" O'Brien, 79, of Cannon Beach, Ore., died on Dec. 25, 2014, at Nehalem Valley Care Center in Wheeler, Ore. He was born Feb. 9, 1935, in Cusick, Wash., to Harry and Beatrice O'Brien. He graduated from Newport High School in Newport, Wash., in 1953.

He served in the U.S. Army and was honorably discharged in 1959.

Mr. O'Brien is sur-

vived by his wife of nearly 51 years, Darlene; his children, Kevin and Shannon; stepchildren, Randy, Loreen and Rick; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

A private burial of his ashes is planned in Newport, Wash.

Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements, and an online guest book may be signed at www.OceanViewAstoria.com



DENNIS MICHAEL