

New Yorker story provides dubious advice

I just want to thank The New Yorker magazine for letting us all know that a hugely destructive earthquake and tsunami could hit us at any time.

If it hadn't been for that story, we on the North Coast might never have realized the danger we are in.

It's not like I and other local journalists — including author Bonnie Henderson, who wrote the book, "The Next Tsunami: Living on a Restless Coast" — haven't been writing about this for many years.

Entitled "The Really Big One" with a subhead, "The earthquake that will devastate the Pacific Northwest," the story, written by Katherine Schulz in the July 20 New Yorker, is accompanied by a topographical map of the west coast of North America in red.

At the coastline, from south of the California border extending to beyond Canada, the map looks like it has been ripped apart; a wide jagged band of white — resembling a huge wave — covers all of the west coast and heads east.

The caption next to the illustration says, "The next full rupture of the Cascadia subduction zone will spell the worst natural disaster in the history of the continent."

Scary, huh? I have followed the Cascadia subduction zone earthquake and tsunami story for over eight years. My first story in the spring of 2007 included an interview

with Rob Witter, formerly of the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (now with the U.S. Geological Service in Alaska), who had just discovered that sand originally from the beach in Cannon Beach had been thrown about a mile east of what is now U.S. Highway 101 during a past tsunami. Witter made the discovery after filtering soil and determining its properties and age in several areas between the beach and forest east of town.

State geologists created a new map for Cannon Beach, showing that land higher than 30 feet in elevation wasn't as safe as experts originally thought. The tsunami inundation zone now reached 80 feet high.

With that news, the research intensified. Oregon State University Coastal and Ocean faculty, along with staffers from DOGAMI, roamed the coast, seeking clues revealing the potential intensity and destructive path of the next Cascadia earthquake and tsunami.

They wrote reports about the sturdiness of local schools and other buildings. They created a model of the city of Cannon Beach in OSU's wave research laboratory, knocked it down with model tsunami waves and studied their effect, then recreated the town and started all over again.

They created a computer simulation of Seaside, showing how long it would take a tsunami to

IMPRESSIONS

By
NANCY
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The potential Cascadia earthquake and tsunami isn't news to us.

reach shore, then Necanicum Drive, then the highway and Wahanna Road and how many people would die as the waves washed over them.

A similar computer simulation was done for Cannon Beach, as well, showing how many people might make it across the Fir Street Bridge and to high ground on the north side, as well as to other elevated areas in town.

A year after the 2011 tsunami hit Japan, the principal from Kesennu Junior High School in the Tohoku region told the story of how his school, at an elevation of 150 feet, became a shelter for six months. At least 16,000 people died in the 9.0

earthquake and resulting tsunami, considered to be the most devastating natural disaster ever to hit Japan.

Locally, residents in Seaside, Cannon Beach and Gearhart created committees and prepared for the Big One. They conducted drills, stored supplies, trained Community Emergency Response Teams and continued to perform myriad other tasks to ensure the public's safety. State geologists drew new tsunami maps for all of the Oregon coast.

And at each step, I and other reporters were there, updating our readers and listeners on the latest developments. Some people paid attention and prepared. Others ignored it. Until The New Yorker writer discovered that the west coast faced potential, overwhelming disaster.

"When the next full-margin rupture happens," Schulz wrote, "that region (the Pacific Northwest) will suffer the worst natural disaster in the history of North America." It will kill 13,000 people and injure another 27,000, she says, citing the Federal Emergency Management Agency's estimates. Shelter will be needed for 1 million people. But we already knew that,

didn't we? Well, at least the rest of the nation knows now.

My question is this: Will The New Yorker story make any difference in our urgency to prepare for an event that, geologically speaking, could happen any time? I hope so, because, to be honest, no matter how much we local journalists covered it, our stories never garnered as much attention as this one story has.

But what's going to be interesting on a whole other level is the local fallout from the July 28 New Yorker's follow-up story to Schulz's original article.

Schulz answers several questions that arose following her initial story. This is what she advises tourists:

"If you are an out-of-towner planning to spend a night in the tsunami zone: don't. Go to the coast by day, for sure. But if you're staying overnight, book a vacation rental, hotel room or campsite outside the inundation zone."

For the coastal towns that depend on overnight visitors, this New Yorker story might portend another, immediate disaster.

Nancy McCarthy recently retired as editor of the Seaside Signal and the Cannon Beach Gazette. Her column appears monthly.



At the Library CARLA O'REILLY

Summer is time to relax and enjoy it all at the library

Summer 2015 has been a busy one at our Cannon Beach Library, and much has been accomplished! Our new website is up, our eBooks program has been installed, and we've rededicated the beautiful Sroufe Memorial Fountain in its new location in front of our building. On top of all that, we had a successful July Fourth book sale and are enjoying the beautiful new landscaping surrounding the library entrance.

On Saturday, Aug. 8, children of all ages enjoyed a wonderful magic show, presented by the Amazing Brett Willyard. The event was free of charge.

Now that so much has been accomplished, we can relax and enjoy it all — our shelves of wonderful books, the warm breezes entering the library through the open door and windows, and especially our friendly visitors who drop in to admire our lovely quilt, purchase previously-enjoyed books, or just relax and read awhile. Speaking of the quilt, tickets are still on sale, and the quilt will be at the Farmer's Market on Tuesday, Aug. 18 for all to see. The lucky winner will be announced at our Holiday Tea in December.

Our second annual summer reading contest,



CARLA O'REILLY

"Catch a Dragon by the Tale," began June 12 and will end on Aug. 24. The contest has been available for children, tweens, and teens. The grand prize winner in each age group also will be announced on Aug. 24.

Cannon Beach Reads meets the third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 8:30 p.m. and will gather on Wednesday Aug. 19 to discuss "The Lathe of Heaven." Written in 1971 by Ursula LeGuin, the book is an award-winning science fiction novel revolving around a character whose dreams alter reality, including past events. As always, new members are welcome.

Looking ahead to September, popular author J.A. Jance will be returning to Cannon Beach and will speak at the Coaster Theater at 2 p.m. on Sept. 15. Her talk was a much enjoyed event last summer, so this year's will be well



BUDDIE ANDERSON/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Cannon Beach Library hosted a Fourth of July book sale.

worth attending. Cannon Beach Library. All in all, it's been a wonderful summer at the library. Come share the rest of it with us!

The Cannon Beach Gazette publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include a small photo and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. The deadline for all obituaries is 9 a.m. the business day prior.

Obituaries may be edited for spelling,

proper punctuation and style. Death notices and upcoming services will be published at no charge. Notices must be submitted by 9 a.m. the day of publication.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at www.dailyastorian.com/obituaryform, by email at ewilson@dailyastorian.com, placed via the funeral home or in person at The

Daily Astorian office, 949 Exchange St. in Astoria. For more information, call 503-325-3211, ext. 257.

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PLEASE NOTE: Urgent Care will close at 1 p.m. on Aug. 16 so that clinic staff and their families can attend the picnic.

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