

Students present local author with Oregon Coast Literary Award

Peter Lindsey shares anecdotes of Cannon Beach's 'history and characters'

By Katherine Lacaze
EO Media Group

Making connections. That was the message local author Peter Lindsey delivered as he received the Oregon Coast Literary Award from Seaside High School students. The annual event celebrates Oregon's offering of diverse, talented authors and literature.

"Stories link us to the past and prepare us for the future," Lindsey said. "In this transitory, ephemeral world, stories alone endure. What are each of us in our lives but a story?"

The awards were held Dec. 2, at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse. Seaside students presented Lindsey with the award for his anecdotal history of Cannon Beach, "Comin' in Over the Rock." They also read excerpts written by two books chosen as finalists: Laini Taylor's "Daughter of Smoke and Bone" and Storm Large's "Crazy Enough."

The Oregon Coast Literary Awards, started in 2012 by teacher Adrian Anderson, used to be a project of the senior honors English class. This year, the class started as an elective with seven students. New English teacher LeeAnn Schmelzenbach led the class.

Making 'a connection'

The class encourages students not only to read, but to read locally, and it promotes "a connection" with people across communities and the state, Schmelzenbach said. After all, she added, that is what stories are: connections. Lindsey echoed that sentiment during a speech at the ceremony.

The selection of finalists alone — whose work included a memoir, a fantasy novel and

an anecdotal history — shows the breadth and depth of great literature being composed in Oregon, Schmelzenbach said.

"The class encourages students to see there is a lot out there, and all of it is valuable," she said.

Each year, students in the class pick the criteria by which they will judge books written by authors who have spent a substantial amount of time in Oregon and who are still living. The students this year picked four criteria: compelling plot, impact, depth of character and depth of theme. The students said Lindsey's book "Comin' in Over the Rock" excelled in these categories.

The students each selected a book to read and then presented it to the class. Once the finalists are chosen, the students read each of the books and pick a winner. Past recipients of the literary award include Craig Lesley, author of "The Sky Fisherman," Cheryl Strayed, author of "Tiny Beautiful Things," and Brian Doyle, author of "Mink River."

Lindsey's account of Cannon Beach

Lindsey, who moved with his family to Cannon Beach in 1954, is a folklorist, who particularly enjoys the tradition of oral storytelling and passing on stories through the generations by word of mouth. At the ceremony, he shared several stories that capture his memories as both a student and teacher at Seaside High School.

"Seaside High has never been large in numbers but always has been very large in spirit and soul," Lindsey said. Addressing students, he added, "You should indeed be proud of your school and yourselves and



Seaside High School student Jesse Trott presents Oregon author Peter Lindsey with awards and gifts for being selected the recipient of the 2015 Oregon Coast Literary Award.

those who preceded you."

Graduates of the high school have included Rhodes Scholars, renowned marine biologists, famed authors and educators, leaders of corporations and even a former president of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City, he said. He told students he was honored and touched to receive the literary award this year.

Lindsey also shared stories from his book, "Comin' in Over the Rock," originally published in 2004. The Cannon Beach community recently held a benefit to raise funds so Lindsey can reprint a new edition of the book with additional stories and photos.

The book is taglined as "A Storyteller's History of Cannon Beach," or as Lindsey put it, "an account of the village I have known, some of its history and characters."

Within its pages, readers are transported back in time, to the days Lindsey spent hanging

out with other teenage boys at an old Shell service station on Hemlock Street ran by George "Happy Tooth" Malstead or skating at the Wave Roller Rink, the former inhabitant of the Coaster Theatre. The roller rink, Lindsey said, had its own cast of characters: Mrs. Walker, who ran the sweet shop; Georgina, daughter of the manager and a young girl popular among the adolescent male demographic; and the unidentified Mr. Backwards, who set the standard for skating when he "flowed around the rink like greased honey."

Lindsey spoke of his father, Harvey Lindsey, one of the members of Cannon Beach's first city councils, and a friend, Stanley, who used to run the Sunset Tavern where the Landing now sits.

"I feel privileged to have known those times and people, many of whom made this little village of Cannon Beach what it has become," Lindsey said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

During the art of ethnobotany class, the students spent a lot of time outside observing, identifying and drawing plants.

Class inspires students to appreciate native plants

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A new elective class at Seaside High School, offered during the first term, introduced students to a combination of studies, including art, botany and ethnobotany.

Teachers Julie Greene and Dorota Haber-Lehigh offered the art of ethnobotany class as an elective to 33 students, from freshmen to seniors.

Throughout the course, the teachers shared the importance of maintaining a diversity of native plants and their importance to humans and the ecosystem in the Pacific Northwest.

"It was more along the lines of environmental education, appreciation for nature and for what surrounds us," Haber-Lehigh said. "I'm hoping the students will see some of it and have different attitudes toward nature and also toward being resourceful, being caring and being more sustainable."

Greene has more than 15 years of experience in botany and biology and Haber-Lehigh, an artist, has taught multiple botanical drawing classes and workshops in the community. The two instructors were looking for a new teaching opportunity and the chance to offer something different for students. They decided to collaborate on the art of ethnobotany class.

"It's something fun that combines our interests," said Greene, a special education teacher.



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